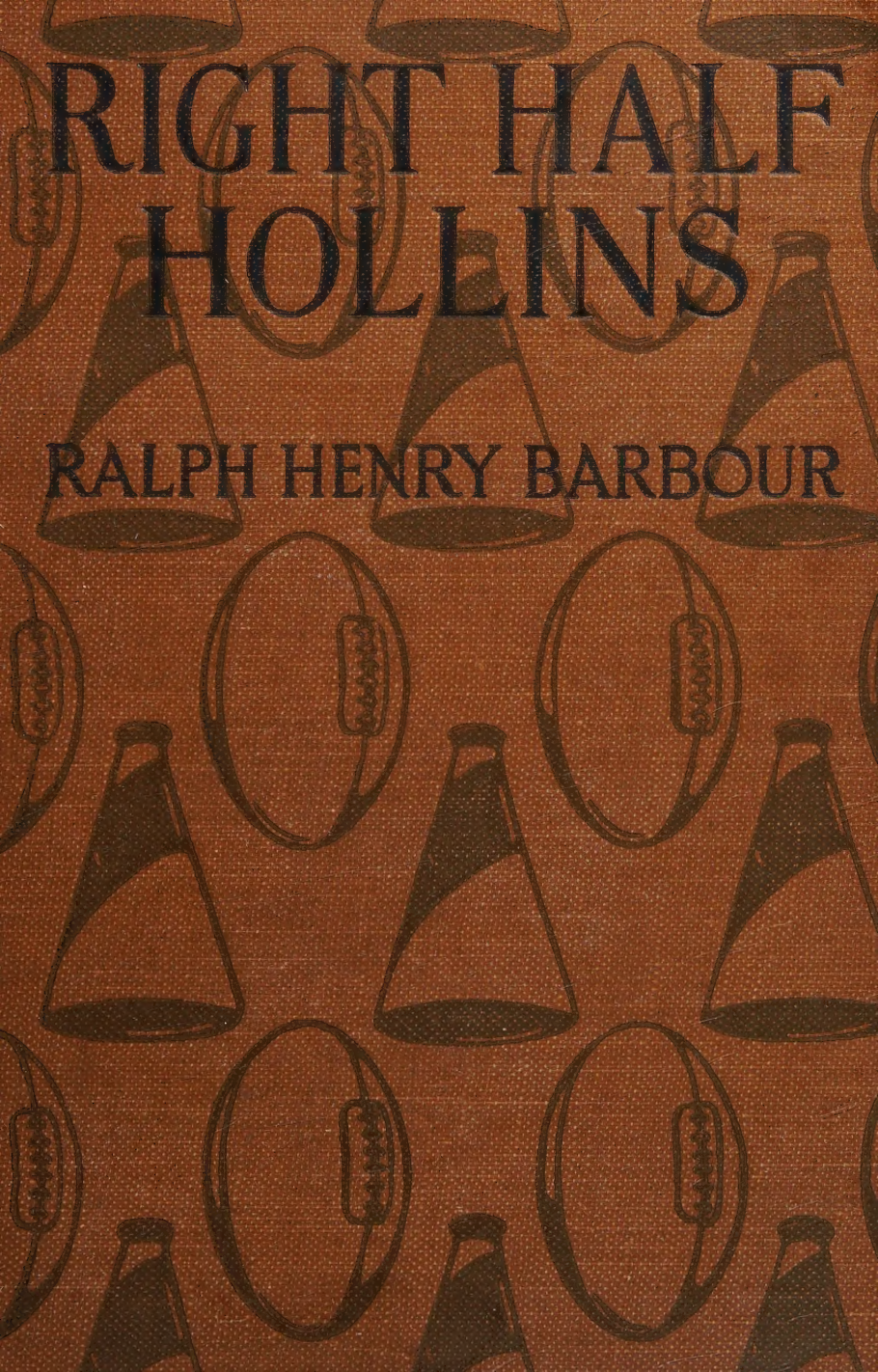
RIGHT HALF HOLLINS

RALPH HENRY BARBOUR



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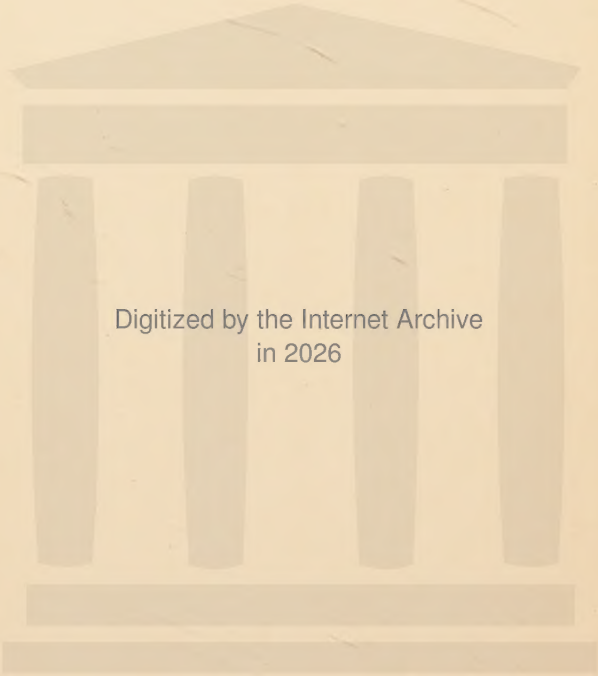

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RIGHT HALF HOLLINS

THE FOOTBALL ELEVEN BOOKS

BY

RALPH HENRY BARBOUR

LEFT END EDWARDS
LEFT TACKLE THAYER
LEFT GUARD GILBERT
CENTER RUSH ROWLAND
FULL-BACK FOSTER
QUARTER-BACK BATES
LEFT HALF HARMON
RIGHT END EMERSON
RIGHT GUARD GRANT
RIGHT TACKLE TODD
RIGHT HALF HOLLINS

Once more Bert gave an imitation of a corkscrew

Page 284

RIGHT HALF HOLLINS

BY

RALPH HENRY BARBOUR

AUTHOR OF
LEFT END EDWARDS,
FULL BACK FOSTER,
RIGHT TACKLE TODD, Etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY
LESLIE CRUMP

GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS NEW YORK

Made in the United States of America

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RIGHT HALF HOLLINS

CHAPTER I

TOMMY PARISH, CRITIC

"Put some glue on your hands, Chick!" advised Tommy Parish in a clear, carrying voice from his seat in the front row of the stand. The sally gained a ripple of laughter from the somewhat apathetic audience. Bert Hollins, huddled under a blanket on the players' bench, a few yards away, turned a mildly indignant countenance toward Tommy and was met with a wide grin and a jovial wink. Across the field, Chick Burton, right end, captured the trickling pigskin and tossed it disgustedly toward the referee. The disgust was natural, for Chick had just missed his third forward-pass in that quarter.

Alton Academy was playing its first game of the season, with Southport School, and the third period was well along. Southport had scored a field-goal in the first quarter and Alton a touchdown in the second. Nip Storer had failed to kick the goal after the latter event. It had been

drizzling ever since noon, and a wet ball and a slippery field were not making for brilliant playing. For that matter, however, even had the weather conditions been of the best it is doubtful if either team would have put up a good game, for both were slow and ragged, missing numerous opportunities to score and plainly badly in need of practice. Perhaps Chick Burton was no worse than the others, but that was a matter of opinion, and Tommy Parish's opinion was to the effect that Chick was the principal offender of the afternoon. If Chick had caught just one of the throws from Jim Galvin, Alton would be in possession of twelve points instead of six. At least, so Tommy thought.

Tommy sat with his knees hunched up almost to his chin and munched peanuts. Tommy was usually munching something. He was a short, heavy youth with a round face and a liability to boils on the back of his brief neck. Indeed, it was quite an unfamiliar sight to see Tommy without at least one protective arrangement of gauze and plaster between his collar and the edge of his pale brown hair. Because his seat was in the front row of the grand-stand, he was able to perch his feet on the edge of the barrier and so form a sort of trough between legs and stomach for the accommodation of his bag of peanuts. When not dipping into the bag or

deftly detaching the shells from their contents he snuggled his hands under the edge of his thick blue sweater. Since Tommy never wore a hat at school—whatever he did at home—a fact which may account to some extent for the faded tone of his hair, he presented a rather damp and bedraggled appearance. Drops trickled down his somewhat button-like nose, encircled his slightly protrusive ears and quivered on his round chin as it moved ceaselessly and rhythmically during the process of mastication. But if moist, he was quite happy. Give Tommy something to eat and something to look on at and weather conditions meant nothing in his young life. His was a cheerful disposition, and if those who smarted under the frank expressions of his judgment frequently wanted very, very much to murder him, Tommy cared not a whit. He believed in being outspoken, in giving candid publicity to his opinions; in short, Tommy hewed to the line and let the chips fall wherever they blame pleased!

The game went on, Southport capturing the ball after Fitz Savell, playing at half, had let it ooze from his arms. Tommy set his strong, white teeth on a particularly attractive peanut and observed reproachfully, "Why don't you hand it to him, Fitz, 'stead of making him pick it up that way? Where's your manners, boy?"

Homer Johnson, two rows back, reached a long

leg across the intervening seat and placed a foot against the back of Tommy's head. Tommy's head went suddenly forward with a jerk and two peanuts fell to the wet boards, a total loss. "Cut out the merry quips, Tommy," advised Homer. "You weary me."

Tommy turned his head cautiously. As a matter of fact he happened to be free from boils at the moment, but affliction had taught him caution in the matter of moving his neck and it had become second-nature. He observed Homer without rancor. "Hello," he said. "Great game, isn't it?"

"The game's bad enough, Tommy, without any help from you," answered Homer coldly.

"Oh, no, Homer, you're wrong," responded Tommy affably. "Nothing's so bad it can't be helped. Constructive criticism, Homer, old timer, is never inopportune, never *mal venu.*" Tommy delighted in French phrases which he pronounced with a fine New England accent. He knew just how far he could go with Homer Johnson without getting into trouble, and it is doubtful if he would have risked that "old timer" had they not been separated by a row of seats and their occupants. Homer was a senior and Tommy still no more than a sophomore, although others who had been his classmates last year were now juniors. Homer frowned but contented himself with "Shut up, Tommy!" delivered sharply. Tommy smiled

placidly and slowly returned his gaze to the peanut bag.

"Crazy kid," commented Freeman Naughton, grinning as soon as Tommy's head was turned away. "I've wanted to kill him fifty times since I've been here!"

"He'd have been dead long ago if I'd yielded to my desire," chuckled Homer. "Tommy bears a charmed life, I guess. Gets away with stuff that would get another fellow kicked from here to State street. Did you hear what he got off on Jonas the other day? He and another fellow were passing in front of Upton and the ball got away from him just as Jonas came along and Tommy yelled, 'Thank you, Jonas!' Well, you know the way Jonas moves when he isn't playing football. He ambled along and picked up the ball and looked at it and finally tossed it back, and Tommy yelled, 'Say, listen! I want to ask you something! Is your name Jonas Lowe or it it Jonah Slow?' I guess Jonas wanted to slaughter him, but he let him live."

Naughton—he went by the name of "Naughty," naturally enough—chuckled. "The cheekiest thing he ever did, though, was in our freshman year. I guess I told you."

"About Kincaid?"

"Yes. Kincaid had wandered off the lesson, the way he does, and was telling the class something

he'd seen in Rome or some place; something about some ruins; and Tommy pipes up with: 'Mr. Kincaid, haven't those ruins been there a long time?' 'Why, yes, Parish,' says Kincaid, 'some thousands of years.' 'Then,' says Tommy sweetly, 'maybe they'll keep, sir, if we go on with the lesson.' "

The quarter came to an end with the score still 6 to 3, the teams changed goals and Mr. Cade, the coach, familiarly known as Johnny, hustled a set of bedraggled substitutes from the bench and sent them trotting in to report. Jake, the trainer, wrapped the deposed ones in dry blankets and circulated an already soiled towel about on which they wiped their wet faces. The game started off on its final period with a new backfield, save for Galvin, at full, and two new linemen. Southport introduced two fresh ends, but made no other changes. Southport made a determined drive for the Alton goal and got the pigskin as far as the twenty-eight yards, where, after two attempts at the Gray-and-Gold's line had yielded scant returns, and a short forward-pass had gone wrong, her left half dropped back and tried to duplicate his feat of the first quarter. But this time he was hurried and the ball slanted off to the left and passed well beyond the goal post. Storer punted on second down and Southport got the pigskin again on Alton's forty-six. Once more she tried desperately to reach a point from which to score by kick-

ing. A wide sweep gained but two yards and a smash straight at the center of the line was good for as many more. Then, however, a puzzling double pass sent a back inside Dozier, at left tackle, and the runner dodged and twirled to the thirty-three before he was nailed by Ball, the Alton quarter-back.

Again Southport tried the ends, first one and then the other, and the ball went out of bounds on the second play. With about twenty-eight to go on a third down and the ball well to the side of the gridiron, a place-kick looked unpromising, and when the visitor set the stage for it Alton was incredulous. Warnings of a forward-pass were cried, but when the ball went back it sped straight to the kneeling quarter and was set to the ground. The kicker was deliberate and Chick Burton, slipping past the defense, almost blocked the ball, but it passed him safely, sailed up and over the cross-bar and added another three points to Southport's score and tied the game.

Alton didn't have a chance to better her figures during the few minutes that remained. Southport, evidently as pleased with results as if she had won, set herself on the defensive and held the enemy safely away from her goal. The stand was almost empty by the time the last whistle blew. In the front row of seats, however, Tommy Parish still huddled, arising at last with a sigh of repletion and

a deluge of peanut shells to the ground. Then, sinking his neck into the collar of his sweater and his moist hands into the pockets of his baggy breeches, he turned from the scene of conflict and made his way back across the soggy field toward Upton Hall. Ahead, the tired players plodded along by twos and threes, blankets trailing, subdued and disgruntled. Toward the end of the procession Coach Cade's short, thick-set figure walked beside that of Captain Lowe. Jonas was almost six feet tall and correspondingly broad, and walked with a lumbering pace that added to the contrast between him and Johnny. The gymnasium swallowed them up and Tommy went on, passing within smelling distance of the kitchens in Lawrence Hall and sniffing the air eagerly. This was a Saturday, and generally on Saturdays the evening meal was extremely satisfactory. Tommy almost regretted those peanuts. Still, nearly an hour must elapse before he would be allowed to assimilate more food, and Tommy's recuperative powers were of the best. He reached the walk between Borden and Upton, turned to the right and presently disappeared into the latter dormitory.

Up in Number 30 Tommy removed his outer garments, swathed his rotund form in a garish blanket dressing-gown and subsided on the window-seat, piling the several silken pillows behind his head. The view was not cheerful just now.

Through the mist-covered panes Tommy looked across the Yard, damply green of turf, to Academy street and the white residences beyond. There were few persons in sight. Up the middle path came a figure in a shining yellow oil-skin coat, snuggling a package under an arm; one of the fellows returning from a shopping expedition, apparently. Tommy wondered whether the contents of the package were edible. A few forms moved along Academy street, citizens with umbrellas these. To the right, near the Meadow street side of the Yard, a light appeared in Doctor McPherson's house. ("Mac" was the principal.) Occupying a corresponding position across the wide expanse of maple dotted turf, Memorial Hall emitted two fellows carrying books from the school library. Tommy watched them idly as they followed the walk which led them to the front of Academy Hall. As they passed Upton he recognized the taller of the two and had half a mind to raise the window and exchange insults. But the effort was too great and he contented himself with tapping a pane with the seal ring he wore. Evidently the sound didn't carry, for the youths disappeared from his range of vision without looking up.

At Alton Academy the dormitories form a line across the top of the campus: Haylow first, near Meadow street, then Lykes, then—with Academy Hall intervening—Upton and Borden. Back of

Academy is Lawrence, which is the dining hall, and well over toward River street, hiding behind Borden, is the Carey Gymnasium. The land descended gently each way from the dormitory row, in the front toward Academy street and the town, in the rear toward the open country. On the latter slope, a slope too gradual to really deserve the name, was the athletic field, with the quarter-mile track, diamonds, tennis courts and sufficient territory besides for the accommodation of such mildly important bodies as the soccer and lacrosse teams. Like many New England preparatory schools, Alton possessed an appearance of age out of proportion with fact, an appearance largely due to the maples that shaded the walks and the ivy that grew almost to the eaves of the older buildings. Not that Alton was a new school, for it was not, but it was younger than many; younger, even, than its principal rival, Kenly Hall, over at Lakeville.

Tommy was getting quite drowsy now and would probably have fallen comfortably asleep if Billy Pillsbury hadn't selected the moment for his homecoming. Billy, generally called "Pill" was sixteen, a sophomore—although, unlike Tommy, he was new at it—and held the proud and important position of Second Assistant Football Manager. Pill was a slight, pink-cheeked, trim-looking youth, with dark hair swept back from a classic brow and held swept by some fragrant concoction

that Tommy found particularly nauseating—or pretended to. Pill entered with the aspect of one wearied by the weight of authority imposed on him and sank into a chair. Tommy viewed him without enthusiasm.

"Gee, what a day!" sighed Pill.

"Yes, rotten," responded the other, carefully misunderstanding. "Doesn't look much like clearing, either."

"Oh, the weather!" Pill put that aside with a wave of a slender hand. "I meant the—the work. And that game! Say, wasn't that criminal, Tommy?"

"Sure was. Every fellow on the team deserves hanging."

"Oh, I don't know," protested Pill. "They're all right. Trouble is, they haven't had enough practice, Tommy."

"Why not? Ten days ought to give them some idea of the game!"

"They weren't any worse than Southport."

"What of it? Last year we licked Southport something like 23 to 0. And the year before by—Well, I forget what it was."

"I don't," returned Pill triumphantly. "It was 6 to 6, the same as to-day. And that year we licked Kenly, and last year we didn't! So you can't prove that the team's going to be rotten that way!"

"I'm not saying it's going to be rotten," answered Tommy placidly. "All I say is that it was rotten to-day. Look at the way Burton played, for instance. He had three chances with forward-passes and missed every one of them. Touched them all, too. Why, we'd have had a touchdown any time if he could have frozen onto just one of them!"

"Chick was sort of out of tune," acknowledged Pill. "He's been that way ever since work started. Looks to me as if he was still sore about the captaincy."

"Think so?" Tommy looked interested. "Say, I'll bet you're *tres* right! I thought he and Jonas Lowe weren't acting awfully thick!"

"Oh, they get on all right," said Pill. "Still, I do think that Chick was awfully disappointed last winter. Maybe you can't blame him, either. Why, I'd have bet my shirt that they'd make him captain, Tommy!"

"Yes, so would I, I guess. The trouble with Chick Burton is that he's a mighty pleasant guy, and most every one likes him a lot and all that. But when it comes to choosing a leader, why, Chick doesn't—er—inspire confidence. That's the way I get it, and I guess that's the way the team felt last December. It was a surprise, though, when they elected Lowe. Guess Jonas was as sur-

prised as any one, even Chick. Think he will make a good captain, Pill?"

"Jonas?" Pill looked frankly dubious. "Gee, I don't know, Tommy. He's a corking old scout, and the fellows like him well enough; and he knows a lot about football; his own position and the other chap's; but it doesn't seem to me that he's what you'd call a born leader."

"Huh, neither is Chick."

"Yes, he is, too! Chick's the—the slap-bang, hit-or-miss sort that—"

"Mostly miss to-day," interpolated Tommy.

"—that fellows take to. He may be wrong, but he makes you think he's right. And he has—well, dash, you know; and a jolly way of banging into everything; sort of a 'Come on, gang, let's go!' fashion that wins the crowd. What I think about Chick is that if he had made the captaincy he'd have been a poor leader, Tommy, but every one would have forgiven him and, if we'd lost to Kenly, would have said: 'Well, it wasn't Chick Burton's fault! It was just rotten luck!' "

"He's sure got a pal in you," said Tommy. "I didn't know you two were so *amical.*"

"Your French is rotten, as usual. We aren't very friendly, either, for that matter. I mean, I don't know him very well. Say, that's a funny thing about Chick Burton. He gets on finely with

every one, but you never see him chummy with a soul. Ever notice that?"

"Oh, I don't know. What about Hollins? He and Chick look to be pretty thick."

"Well, they room together, you know, and I heard they were pals before they came here. But outside of Bert Hollins he doesn't take up with any fellow, so far as I see."

Tommy chuckled reminiscently. "You ought to have seen the pained look on Bert's face this afternoon when I razzed Chick once for missing a throw! Say, that poor nut thinks Chick invented football, I guess."

Pill, having finally set about the task of removing his damp clothing, chuckled as he kicked off a shoe. "I'll bet! Bert thinks Chick is just about all right, I guess. Talk about Damon and Pythias!"

"Well, I fancy it's a bit one-sided," replied Tommy pessimistically. "Friendships generally are."

"Oh, I don't know. Chick's a senior and could have gone into Lykes this fall if he'd wanted to. But he stayed here in Upton so's he could be with Bert. That looks like he thought a good deal of him, doesn't it?"

"Maybe and peradventure," Tommy yawned. "Hurry up and get dressed. I'm starved. I see

Bert's still trying to play football. This is his third season, isn't it?"

"Second. He's a junior. I dare say he will make the team this year. He told me the other day that he'd put on seven pounds since last fall. He isn't a bad player. He might have got placed last fall if he hadn't been so light. Johnny had him in a few minutes to-day, at the last."

"Well, I'd like to see him make it," said Tommy reflectively. "He's sure tried hard and long, and I'm strong on the nil desperandum stuff, Pill. Who do we play next week?"

"Banning High. Bet you you'll see a different game next Saturday, Tommy."

"If I don't," responded the other, "I'll ask for my money back! Say, *pour l'amour de Michel,* do we eat or don't we?"

CHAPTER II

BERT REFUSES AN INVITATION

"WANT to play some pool?" asked Chick.

Bert leaned back in the chair and caressed the end of his straight nose with the rubber tip of his pencil. "Depends," he replied. "If you mean at that evil-smelling dive you dragged me into last week the answer is no, Chick."

"What's the matter with Mooney's?" demanded the other. "He's got the best tables in town."

"I know, but the smoke's so thick there you could cut it with a knife, and it makes my eyes smart. That's why you beat me last time."

"Shucks, a little smoke won't hurt you. Come on. Besides, when a fellow can't smoke himself a little of the aroma of the weed isn't so bad."

"Maybe, but I noticed the last time that it sort of made you absent-minded, Chick."

"How do you mean? Oh, that! Shucks, one cigarette at this stage of the game doesn't matter. We weren't really in training last Saturday, any way."

Bert Hollins smiled and shook his head. "That's a punk alibi, Chick. Suppose some one had happened to look in? There'd been the dickens to pay."

"Some one being Johnny Cade?" asked Chick, grinning. "Johnny doesn't frequent that part of town, old son. Don't look so blamed virtuous or I'll punch your head. Anyway, I'm off the things until we quit training."

"Which being so," said the other, "you'd better get rid of the box in your top drawer. They might tempt you, Charles, beyond your power of resistance."

"Say, how come you've been snooping through my chiffonier? Hang it, Bert, you've got a cheek!"

"Wait a minute! Did you or didn't you ask me to get you a handkerchief one day and drop it out the window to you? And was or wasn't said handkerchief in said top drawer of said—"

"Oh, shut up," said Chick, grinning. "All right, old son. Say no more. But trust you to see the fags! As to getting rid of them, that would be rotten extravagance, Bert. No, but I'll stick 'em out of sight where I won't see 'em. How'll that do? But, listen. Will you shoot some pool, or won't you, you poor fish?"

"Won't," answered Bert. "That is, I will if you'll play in a respectable place, but I don't like the atmosphere of Rooney's—"

"Mooney's."

"Looney's, then. And I'm not referring entirely to the tobacco smoke. A lot of the gentlemen who

frequent that dive are the sort that my Sunday school teacher expressly warned me against, Chick."

"Oh, cut out the comedy stuff," growled the older boy. "Come on, won't you? You don't have to pay any attention to the others. I'll give you a handicap of—"

"No, thanks, old man, I really had rather not. Anyway, I've got some math here that will stand an hour's work."

"Do it later. Great Scott, don't you know this is Saturday night?"

"Sure, but I sort of feel in the mood for math, Chick. A—a kind of mental alertness possesses me, and although—"

"Oh, go to thunder!" said Chick shortly, and pulled a cap on his head. "The next time I ask you, you'll know it, you blamed Miss Nancy."

"Them's hard words," murmured Bert. "What time you coming back?"

"Some time before ten. Why?"

"Just wondered if you recalled the fact that you're supposed to be in bed by that hour."

"*What?* Who said so? Johnny hasn't started that stuff yet, has he?"

"Even so, Chick. He specifically mentioned his wishes no later than yesterday. Every one in bed by ten sharp, were his words."

"Well, he's got a crust," Chick declared.

"That's mid-season stuff. How's he get that way?"

"I really can't say, but, joking aside, Charles, do try to be home by nine-thirty or thereabouts, eh? These late hours—"

"Oh, shut up!" With his hand on the door, Chick made a final and pathetic appeal. "Be a good guy, Bert, won't you? Listen, we'll go to that place on West street, if you can't stand Mooney's."

Bert waved the pencil in dismissal. "Run along to your disreputable acquaintances, Chick. Fact is, I'm not feeling lucky to-night. Besides, I got a slam on the shin this afternoon that tells me I wouldn't enjoy tramping a couple of miles around a table. Some other time, O Wizard of the Cue."

"Honest, you make me sick!" The door shut with some force, leaving Bert smiling at it. He rather enjoyed ragging Chick, and Chick, while he sometimes became exasperated, never lost his temper. Not with Bert, that is. For one thing, they had known each other ever since they had begun to walk; or, at least, since Bert had, for Chick, who was a full year older, had probably found the use of his legs first. They had grown up together in Watertown, adventured together, gone to school together, had been practically inseparable for some fifteen years. Chick had a temper, although it was pretty well governed, but save

in the very earliest years of their acquaintance he had never been really angry with Bert. Perhaps his year of seniority had something to do with it, for, although Bert could be trying at times, Chick considered that the other's youth excused him. Each of the boys made a good deal of that thirteen months of difference in their respective ages. Chick had always assumed an elder brother attitude, Bert had always accepted the position of junior unquestioningly, crediting Chick with superior wisdom and all the advantages popularly supposed to accrue to those of great age and experience. Always, that is, until very recently. Within the last year, it seemed, the matter of age had become less important. Possibly, as sometimes happens, Bert had matured more in that time than Chick had. Whereas a year back the older boy had held the rôle of mentor, now it was Bert who sought to guide Chick's steps. Sometimes a slightly puzzled look would come into Chick's countenance, indicating that he was sensible of a difference in their relations and hadn't yet fathomed it.

In general appearance the friends were not unalike. Both were fairly tall, well-proportioned youths, Bert slimmer and lighter than Chick but not destined to remain so much longer. Both were dark of complexion, Chick with gray eyes and Bert with brown. On the score of good looks the older

boy held an advantage, for his features were regular, while Bert's, with the single exception of a straight nose, were decidedly haphazard. Still, expression counts more than features, as a general thing, and both scored there, although in different fashions. Chick's face told of high spirits and vivacity and thirst for adventure, and a ready, careless smile won friendship easily. On occasion that smile could be a bit supercilious. Bert's countenance was normally rather grave, although if one looked closely there was generally a glint of laughter lurking in the brown eyes. It was a friendly countenance, but not an ardent one. Bert's smile was slow to appear, but it was very genuine and was usually followed by a rather infectious laugh.

Before Chick's footfalls had entirely died away beyond the closed door that smile had faded to an expression of uneasiness. Bert had joked about Mooney's and the frequenters of Mooney's, about the cigarettes and the ten o'clock bed hour, but those things were really threatening to cause him some concern. Chick was different this fall, he reflected now, jabbing tiny holes in a blotter with the sharp point of the pencil. Perhaps being a senior made you that way. Football, which had been an all-absorbing interest to Chick last year and the year before that, now seemed to have small appeal for him. Of course, Chick had felt badly about missing the captaincy last winter; had, in con-

versation with Bert, been rather bitter about it; but this present careless, don't-give-a-whoop attitude toward the team and his job on it was unexpected. Last year, for instance, Chick wouldn't have smoked a cigarette during the season if some one had offered him cigarette, match and a thousand dollars! Nor would he have protested against the ten o'clock bed rule. And—Bert shook his head at this reflection—he wouldn't have played as listlessly as he had played this afternoon. To Bert, who had been trying two seasons for a position on the team, the honor of being selected from among some four hundred fellows to represent Alton Academy on the football field was something to work for and make sacrifices for and, if won, to be mighty proud of!

Perhaps Chick was too sure of his position, Bert reflected. Last year he had played a rather remarkable game toward the latter part of the season and had been largely instrumental in securing the lone touchdown which, with a field-goal by Nip Storer, one of the half-backs, represented Alton's earnings in the disastrous Kenly Hall contest. Chick had been wonderful on defense and had spoiled more than one Kenly dash in the direction of the Alton line. On attack he had performed his share, too, for it was his catch of a long forward-pass that had made it possible for Jim Galvin, substituting for the first-string full-back

in the second quarter, to smash his way across the Cherry-and-Black's line. Chick had been a fine and gallant warrior that day, and Bert warmed toward him at the recollection until his present shortcomings seemed of no importance. It had been Chick, too, who had swooped down on a loose ball in the last few minutes of the game and raced off up the long field, dodging, side-stepping, twirling, to the enemy's twelve yards before he was pulled down from behind. That Alton had failed lamentably to gain a foot on the next four plays detracted not at all from Chick's heartening performance. Indeed, that brief threat had somehow made the pill of defeat less bitter to the Gray-and-Gold that drizzling November evening. Kenly Hall had won that contest by 16 to 9 with a team that was a better all-around eleven than Alton's. The latter had shown fine moments, feats of brilliance, daring plays, but Kenly had been steady, machine-like, irresistible, and the victory had been hers deservedly. Bert brought his thoughts back from that thrilling battle, in which he had taken part for just three minutes and forty seconds at the tag-end, thereby winning the privilege of wearing the "Big Gold A," and resolutely drew his book toward him. Mr. Hulman, the mathematics instructor, was a new member of the faculty, and seemed set on emulating the new broom and sweeping clean. Bert laid his pencil aside, placed elbows

on desk and hands against cheeks and set out to discover what it was all about.

After a while the pencil came into play again, and still later Bert closed the book with a sigh of relief, pushed it away from him and glanced at his watch. It was only a few minutes after eight! There was still time to pick up some fellow along the corridor and get to the movie theater for the big picture, but after a tentative start toward the closet to get his cap he shook his head and sank into an easy chair. Saturday evening was no time to find an agreeable companion. All the fellows save those Bert didn't desire as companions would be out. He decided to write a letter home instead, performing a task usually done on Sunday. He began to think what he would write, and that was fatal, for half an hour later he was still in the chair, his thoughts a long way from the letter. In the end, he found a book which he had started to read away back in August, undressed, went to bed and read. He was still reading when Chick returned.

"Hello," said Bert, "what time is it?"

Chick frowned. "For the love of Pete, cut that out," he protested. "Honest, Bert, you're getting to be an awful nagger!"

"Sorry," said Bert. "I asked only because I've been reading and haven't any idea what time of night it is." He sat up and looked at the little

clock on the nearer chiffonier. It was four minutes past ten according to the clock, but as the latter was frequently wrong he didn't accept the evidence as conclusive. He laid back again, yawned, dropped the book to the floor and clasped his hands under his head. Chick, undressing, whistled cheerfully; almost too cheerfully Bert thought. "Have a good game?" the latter asked presently.

"Corking. I certainly made the old balls do tricks to-night. Played three games of fifty points and won two of them. Had to go some to get the last one, though. That's why I'm sort of late."

"Who did you play with?" asked Bert.

"Fellow named Devore."

"Devore? Guess I don't know him. Not in school, is he?"

"No, he's a guy lives in town. Works with the railroad, I think. Pretty decent sort and a clever lad with a cue. If I hadn't been going mighty well to-night I wouldn't have got a game, I guess. Gosh, that place was crowded, Bert!"

"Rooney's?"

"No, Mooney's, you coot!" Chick disappeared into the corridor in slippers and dressing-gown. Bert stared at the ceiling a moment and then got out of bed and consulted his watch. The little clock for once was right to a minute. When Chick returned from the lavatory Bert was apparently asleep and Chick turned out the light and got into

bed. Silence reigned for a minute or two. Then Chick asked softly: "Asleep, Bert?"

"No, are you?"

"Sure! No, listen. Who do you suppose I met over on Meadow street, coming home?"

"Prince of Wales?"

"No; Johnny."

After a moment Bert asked: "Did he see you?"

"Of course he did," replied the other impatiently. "Didn't I say I met him? Ran right into him, almost, in front of that laundry over there."

"Did he say anything?"

"Nothing but 'Ah, Burton!' or something like that."

"What time was it, Chick?"

"Ten, or nearly. The clock struck when I got to West street. Talk about rotten luck! Why the dickens he was prowling around over there at that time of night, goodness only knows! If he had stopped I'd have given him a stall, but he just said 'Ah, Burton' in a kind of a funny tone and kept right on. I think he had something in his hand; a bag, I guess."

"Maybe he's going home over Sunday. There's a train about ten-twenty, I think."

"That's so." Silence fell again in Number 21 and continued for several minutes. Then Chick's voice came once more. "Sort of wish I hadn't run into him, Bert."

"Me and you both," agreed Bert.

"Of course it's blamed poppycock, that ten o'clock bed rule, but he's acting kind of snorty this fall and he may get on his ear about it. If he does, by gosh, I'll tell him I'm no kid freshman to have to go to bed with the chickens!"

"Sure! That will make it all right with him," answered Bert. "He will like that, Chick."

"Oh, well, hang it, a fellow's got to have some fun! What's the good of going to bed at ten, anyway? You don't get to sleep."

"Not if you keep on talking," said Bert, yawning.

"Gosh," grumbled the other, "you could go to sleep at seven, I guess. How long have you been in bed?"

"Couple of hours."

"What, didn't you go out at all?"

"Uh-huh—I mean no! Say, for Pete's sake, Chick, shut up and go to sleep! How do you think I'm going to keep my schoolgirl complexion if you go on jabbering?"

"All right. But, just the same, I wish I'd come home by State street!"

"Or started earlier," murmured Bert.

Chick glared resentfully across through the darkness but could think of no appropriate retort. Then came unmistakable indications that his roommate was asleep.

CHAPTER III

AN HUMBLE MEMBER

Chick—his full name, by the way, was Charles Sumner Burton—concluded on Monday that Coach Cade's preoccupation in the matter of getting to the station in time for his train Saturday night had kept him from realizing the other's offense. Of course, being a trifle late into bed was no hanging matter, but Johnny had been more than usually strict during the ten days or so of school, and Chick had no wish to be called down. Johnny was mild-mannered and soft-spoken enough when things went right, but when they didn't he could be decidedly caustic. He was about thirty years of age, a short, solidly-built, broad-shouldered and deep-chested man with the blackest of black hair that reminded one of the bristles on a shoe-brush. His countenance presented the not unusual contrast of a smiling mouth and a fighting chin. Tradition had it that some ten years before Johnny Cade had been a very difficult man to stop when he had the ball in his arms and his head down! Chick believed it, and it was far from his plan to interpose any sort of opposition between Johnny and his desires.

Besides, Chick liked Mr. Cade a whole lot. In a way of speaking, Johnny had made a football player of Chick during the last two years. Of course Chick didn't give all the credit to the coach; he felt that he himself had contributed largely to the result; but he did acknowledge a considerable obligation and was correspondingly grateful. Chick liked him for other reasons, too, which were the reasons that swayed most of those who knew Johnny. The coach was acknowledgedly square, quite as prompt and generous with praise as with blame; if he worked his charges hard, he set the pace himself; he was easy of approach, liked a joke and never took advantage of his authority, which was that of a faculty member. In short, he was, in school parlance, a "white man." He had been in charge of the Alton teams for a number of years and had turned out winning elevens in most of them. There was a rumor current this fall to the effect that the end of the present season would likewise be the end of Johnny's coaching career, but the report lacked official confirmation and the School hoped it wasn't correct.

That Monday afternoon was largely given over to the first principles of football, which was one way of informing those who had taken part in the Southport game that their labors had not been wholly satisfactory. About sixty fellows had reported since the beginning of the term and these

were divided into three squads at present: Squad A, which consisted of nineteen players who had served on the First Team last year; Squad B, which contained the members of the former Second Eleven and a few fellows who had shown promise on the various scrub teams, and Squad C, composed of those whose ambition excelled their experience and a half-dozen or so who had entered school this fall and who were as yet unknown quantities. But to-day, whether you were a Squad A or a Squad C man, you tackled the dummy until you were thoroughly covered, even impregnated, with the still-damp loam of the pit, passed and caught and fell on the ball in the most rudimentary manner and, if you happened to be a candidate for a line position, duck-waddled and, with your head and shoulders thrust into the charging harness, did your best to drag two restraining youths with you over the slippery turf. If you happened to have to set your heart on holding down a backfield position you were spared the harness but worked just as hard at starting and at various other tasks cunningly devised to teach celerity, accuracy and the rest of the football virtues.

There are always those who resent what, in class room, would be termed review work. To a fellow who had played against Kenly Hall for two seasons, being returned to the drudgery of kinder-

garten stuff was a ridiculous imposition in the judgment of several of the Squad A members. Chick was among those who resented the imposition, but he showed his resentment less than most of the others. He had a hunch that it might be just as well not to court the limelight this afternoon, that if he could survive practice without coming to the notice of the coach he would not be likely to awaken memories, memories dating back to Saturday night at some four minutes to ten o'clock! So Chick, albeit his soul revolted, ground his face into the dirt and filled his ears with it at tackling practice and maintained a cheerful countenance, abstaining, even when at the end of the waiting line farthest from Mr. Cade, from joining in the grumbles and sarcasms delivered in guarded tones.

To an unbiased onlooker it might have appeared that the smiling, shock-haired man in the faded and torn sweater and the old khaki trousers had some reason for trundling the stuffed effigy along the wire for the benefit of Squad A, because, after all, quite a few members of that coterie performed extremely poorly at the task of wrapping their arms about the dummy and dragging it to earth, and not much better at throwing their bodies in front of it in blocking. In fact, those who appeared to have really mastered these sciences were to be counted on the fingers of two hands, omitting

the thumbs! Even Captain Jonas Lowe, who, with Andy Dozier, left tackle, towered inches above all the others and looked the perfect football lineman, failed to win commendation to-day; a fact which aided Chick considerably to endure the indignity put upon him. Chick had not yet forgiven Jonas for winning the captaincy over his head, something which, of course, Jonas wasn't in the least to blame for, although if you had charged Chick with harboring resentment at this late day he would have denied the allegation indignantly. He would probably have felt rather insulted. Certainly he would have reminded you that he had himself put the motion to make Jonas's election unanimous, and he would have pointed out that he and the new captain were the best of friends. The latter assertion would, however, have been only negatively true. That is to say, he and Jonas were friends merely to the extent of never being unfriendly, which constitutes a relationship somewhat different from that implied by Chick. Whether Jonas realized that Chick still begrudged him the leadership of the team, would have been hard to say, but it was perfectly apparent that if he did realize it he was not in the least troubled about it. There was something rather Jovian about the big, cumbersome, placid Jonas. You got the impression of one gazing calmly down from

Olympus, untroubled by petty mortals and their affairs.

Of those who did win a word of praise from Johnny Cade this afternoon one was Bert Hollins. There were quite a few things in the line of football essentials that Bert was good at, and tackling, whether of the dummy or a hard-running enemy, was one of them. Bert's relation to the team was somewhat peculiar. Last season, after trying very hard to make the Second until well into October, he had succeeded only in getting hurt in his third scrimmage. He had attended practice with a crutch under his left arm for a week and watched it from the bench for nearly a week more. Then, almost before he had limbered that injured knee up again, there had come a demand from the First for a light, fast backfield man and Mr. McFadden, coach of the Scrubs, had sent Bert across on approval. That had been a big moment in the boy's life, that sudden elevation to the First Team, and he had tried desperately hard to make good. In a manner he had succeeded, for he had shown about everything except weight and experience. One without the other might have served, but together they kept him in the background. He played in two of the late-season contests and won good words, and, as a reward, was sent in by the coach near the end of the big game to earn his letter.

There had been no opportunity for a signal display of brilliancy. He had not seized the ball and dashed sixty or seventy or eighty yards down the field for a touchdown and consequent victory.

None of the thrilling, dramatic feats which story tellers love to relate, and which sometimes really are performed, fell to his portion. As a matter of unromantic fact, he had the ball but once and lost better than two yards in an ill-advised attempt to knife through inside tackle. Better men than he had repeatedly failed at that play already. He emerged from that fray with no more glory than he had entered, but he had at least emerged a full-fledged member of the Alton Academy Football Team, with the right to wear a big golden-yellow A on his gray sweater, a tiny yellow football on his cap and a gray-gold-gray ribbon on his straw hat in summer. There were other privileges and benefits, too, although of secondary importance. For instance, he could reserve four seats in the center of the stand for the Kenly games, he could cast a vote in the election of captain—a prerogative he had subsequently exercised—and his countenance, together with some thirty other countenances, would grace the wall of the gymnasium for posterity to gaze upon with awe—or boredom.

Bert was mighty proud of his membership, but his satisfaction was dulled by the suspicion that

he didn't really deserve the honor. There were fellows—he could think of half a dozen, perhaps—who played better football than he did and who had not won the coveted A. In short, Bert secretly looked on himself as a Letter Man in name only! But he meant to correct all that. This fall he was going to deserve the prize he had won. He was going to try so blamed hard that success simply wouldn't be able to escape him! He had added several pounds since last winter and at least an inch of height, and he had handled a football nearly every day during the summer, generously obeying Mr. Cade's injunction to the members of the squad. If all the milk he had drunk and all the eggs he had eaten could have been mixed together the result would have been an omelet as big as—well, I don't know how big. But I do know that in August Bert's mother had to call the family physician in to advise a bilious boy to omit eggs from his diet for the rest of the summer. Perhaps what had kept Bert from attaining the height of Captain Jonas and the rotundity of Lum Patten by the middle of September was the fact that when he wasn't throwing or kicking a football around he was playing tennis or swimming.

No matter how he figured it, Bert couldn't make himself out better than a third-choice substitute half-back. Storer, Ness, Savell, Keys and Tyron were the mainstays, and then there were at least

three other backfield candidates who, in Bert's estimation at least, were held in higher esteem than he. And goodness only knew who else might suddenly spring into the spot-light before the season was over! Well, if hard work and the most determined efforts would avail he meant to land considerably nearer the head of the list than he was now. What he feared more than all else was a repetition of last fall's catastrophe. He was light and so subject to rude handling, and last season's experience had proved how surprisingly easy it was to get hurt. Why, he had merely stumbled over some fellow's legs and been out of the game for almost a fortnight with a wrenched knee! Even as late as early summer the silly thing had twinged him occasionally, although he had been careful not to mention the fact. He believed it to be as good as ever now, but he was haunted by the fear that it might not be, that he would hurt it again and be laid off. Being laid off was a fatal thing sometimes. Like time and tide, football seasons wait for no one, and more than one poor fellow on the injured list has watched a hale substitute run off with his position under his very eyes. Fear of another injury to that left knee or to some other portion of his anatomy was threatening to become an obsession, although he didn't realize it.

Going back to Upton after practice was over,

Bert asked Chick whether Coach Cade had said anything about Saturday night. Chick laughed. "Not a word, old scout. Know what I think? Well, I think he was so taken up with getting that train that he forgot all about seeing me. Anyway, he didn't say a word to-day. Didn't even look cross-eyed at me!"

"That's luck," said Bert. "Take my advice, Chick, and don't get caught again."

"Not going to, believe me. Another time I'll come home by River street, even if it is longer. It's a safe bet Johnny doesn't wander around over there!"

"Maybe not, but the safest thing is to be in the dormitory by nine-thirty, and that's your play from now on. You can't be quite certain about Johnny. Maybe he's forgotten about meeting you the other night and maybe he hasn't. I wouldn't want to bet either way, Chick."

"Oh, well, he's got too many other things to worry about, I guess. Say, he had an awful cheek to work A Squad the way he did to-day. Regular beginners' stuff! Gosh, I've got more dirt in my hair than I'll be able to get out in a dozen shampoos. Funny thing was, though," added Chick as they started upstairs, "that we tackled the dummy like a lot of pups!"

"The tackling in the Southport game was pretty rotten," said Bert. "I don't believe there were

more than two clean tackles made by our gang, Chick."

"And I made them both?" laughed Chick. "Thanks!"

"You did not! You were as bad as any of them. Pete Ness made one corking tackle the time he got that Southport guy over by the side-line, and I think it was Billy Haines made the other. Generally we just sort of tagged the other fellow on the shoulder and let him by!"

"Well, you've got to be polite to your guests," replied Chick, grinning. "I did miss my tackles pretty awfully, though, and I know it as well as you do, old scout. Fact is, Bert, I haven't been playing my real game yet. I guess it takes a fellow a week or so to get back into harness, eh? Oh, by the way, I told Coles we'd be around to see him this evening. He's got some apples his folks sent him from New Hampshire or somewhere and he wants them eaten up before they go bad. He says the training table starts Wednesday evening, Bert."

"I wonder if I'll get on it."

"Sure! Why not? At that, though, you'll be lucky if you don't. You get beastly tired of the grub after about a month of it."

"I saw Mr. McFadden at the field to-day," said Bert. "I guess they'll be starting the Scrub Team pretty soon."

"Next week, probably. Good thing, too, for the place is all littered up over there now."

"I hope it doesn't occur to Johnny to put me back where he got me," Bert observed ruefully. "I dare say fellows do get dropped to the Second sometimes, don't they?"

"Yes, but I don't think you need to worry about that. You'll get along all right, Bert. I have a hunch that Johnny's going in for a fast backfield this year, and when it comes to speed you've got it all over some of the chaps. It was that lot of heavy, slow backs that spilled the beans for us last year, if you make inquiry of me. Things went a heap better in the last quarter, after some of those truck horses had quit!"

"I'd hate to go back to the Second," mused Bert.

"Gosh, you can find more things to worry about!" laughed the other. "Last week you were afraid you were going to break a leg or something. You're the original calamity howler, Bert!"

Bert smiled. "I suppose it's because I want so hard to make good this year, Chick," he answered apologetically.

"You're going to, old scout, so buck up. Not that you've any right to expect it, either. Most fellows don't get a position nailed down until their senior year."

"You did. And so did Lowe."

"Exceptions proving the rule, Bert. As for Jonas, I'll say he played in a good deal of luck last fall. If Peabody hadn't gone bad on account of studies and getting all worked up over the way Mac and the rest of the Faculty nagged him there for a while Jonas would still be a sub, I'll bet. Mind you, Bert, I'm not saying he isn't a good player when he gets started, but no one would have discovered it if Dick had held his job. Why, up to the Lorimer game or after Jonas was kicking his heels on the bench more times than he was playing!"

"Yes, I guess there was some luck in that," acknowledged Bert. "But Jonas certainly filled Peabody's place mighty nicely after he got it. Who's going to make left end position this fall, Chick?"

"Left end? Why, I guess Joe Tate's pretty certain of it. Just as certain as I am of right end." Chick's laugh suggested that there wasn't much doubt in his mind about that!

"Kruger was awfully good Saturday for the little while he played," said Bert.

"Oh, Dutch is good, too. One of the best. But I guess Joe's got it cinched. Where you're going to see some surprises, though, before Johnny has knocked the outfit into shape is between Joe and center. Meecham won't last at guard and I

wouldn't give an awful lot for Andy Dozier's chance at tackle. Unless I miss my guess Nat Wick will have Meecham out of there inside of a fortnight."

"But Dozier's a crackajack, Chick! Why, last year—"

"All right, but what happened in the Kenly game? They ripped him to pieces in just about twenty minutes, didn't they?"

"I heard he was sick. Some one said he was up in Patten's room for an hour that morning and Lum and two or three others were dosing him with everything from hair oil to Seidlitz powders! I remember myself that he looked like the dickens just before lunch."

"Funk, probably. I've seen fellows worse than he was before a big game. They get over it by the time to start. Gosh, I've been sort of teetery myself!"

"You! Bet it was something you'd eaten then," jeered Bert. "You've got about as much—as much whatever it is as a goat!"

"Is that so? I'll have you understand that I'm a man of very delicate—er—susceptibilities. Highly strung, nervous, you know. Temperamental! That's the old word I wanted."

"Put your coat on and let's get over to supper," said Bert. "You're saying things that don't mean anything!"

CHAPTER IV

THE MANAGER GIVES A PARTY

Coles Wistar's room in Lykes, which he shared with Ted Ball, First Team quarter-back, looked full to capacity when Chick and Bert arrived there that Monday evening. Once inside, however, accommodations of a sort could be discerned, and Chick crowded onto a bed and Bert squeezed in between Anstruther and Tommy Parish on the window-seat. Coles Wistar was Football Manager, and it was largely a football crowd which was present. There were George Anstruther, familiarly "Judge," and Billy Pillsbury, assistant managers, Ted Ball, Hank Howard, Pete Ness, Jim Galvin and Nip Storer, all of the Team. Tommy Parish was present because Pill had brought him and no one had yet thrown him out. Homer Johnson, who roomed with Captain Lowe, had brought Jonas's regrets and remained to partake of hospitality. These, with the host, Chick and Bert, formed the party, a round dozen in all.

Lykes Hall, reserved for the Senior Class Students, held fewer rooms than the other dormitories, but, fortunately for Coles' party, they were larger than the rooms in Haylow or Upton or Bor-

den, the latter the Freshman domicile. Number 5 was well-furnished and attractive, for Coles had excellent taste in such matters. There was a refreshing lack of school and college pennants on the walls, this style of decoration being represented by a single Alton banner hung above the double windows. There were a good many pictures, most of them etchings, of which Coles was a modest collector, a few framed photographs and one lone trophy on the walls. The latter, placed above a closet door, was a wooden panel some three feet long with a black, sanded background against which gilt letters startlingly announced "EASTBOUND TRAINS." It was a memento of Ted Ball's unregenerate freshman days, and although it had always grated against Coles' artistic sensibilities he had never been able to persuade Ted to remove it. Ted acknowledged that it might be a jarring note in the decorative scheme, but he had annexed that trophy under extremely difficult circumstances, braving arrest and, possibly, penal servitude, and, although nowadays self-condemnatory in his explanation of its presence here, he was secretly very proud of it. Ted was a rather stocky, bright-eyed chap of eighteen, fun-loving and extremely popular at Alton. He was equally brilliant at studies and as a quarterback, a shining example to his team-mates which, unfortunately, not many emulated.

The particular host of the evening, Coles Wistar, was unlike his room-mate in many ways. Coles was tall, with a thin face and lightish hair, wore glasses and looked intellectual. He had spent a year at a junior preparatory school near Boston before coming to Alton and had managed to acquire the broad A and a Bostonese accent. You could always make a hit with Coles by inferring that he came from the Hub, although as matter of fact, he lived in a small village in New Hampshire. In spite of one or two trifling affectations he was no fool and was an unusually capable manager. Conversation, interrupted by the arrival of Chick and Bert, gathered momentum again. Tommy Parish, it appeared, had, in the terse phraseology of Hank Howard, been "shooting off his mouth again."

"Says the Team's the rottenest he's seen since he came here," explained Hank to Chick. "The silly ass doesn't know a thing about football, anyway, but you'd think, to hear him go on—"

"Pshaw," began Chick, "why pay attention to that coot? He just likes to hear himself—" But Tommy, even in the midst of Coles' scathing rejoinder, overheard and challenged Hank's assertion.

"All wrong, Howard. I know a heap more about football than most of you guys who play it, or try

to. Why wouldn't I? All you fellows learn is how to look after your own positions. You're on the inside looking cross-eyes at your own jobs. I'm on the outside looking in at the whole works. Now let me—"

"Muzzle him, somebody," said Nip Storer.

"Tie a can to him," advised Jim Galvin.

"Let the silly ass talk," laughed Ted Ball. "Go on and tell 'em, Tommy."

"Sure." Tommy looked entirely composed, quite unaffected by hostility. Any one well acquainted with him—Pill, for instance—would have known that he was having a thoroughly good time. "Sure I'll tell them. Howard says I don't know anything about football. All right. I say I know more about it than he does."

"Quit your kidding," growled Hank.

"He may know more or less about playing tackle, but I'll bet he can't answer three questions I can put to him."

"What sort of questions?" demanded Hank suspiciously.

"Questions on football. Questions covered by the rules which you're all supposed to know from A to Z, whether you're a tackle or an end or a back."

"Heck, I don't pretend to have all the rules at my finger ends," protested Hank. "There are too many of them!"

"Shoot 'em, Tommy," said Jim Galvin. "Go on, kid."

"All right, but these are for Howard, mind. The rest of you keep out. First, your side kicks, Howard. You are on-side. The opponent prepares for a fair catch. You are nearer the ball than he is. What would happen if you made the catch?"

"I'd get socked ten or fifteen yards, of course," answered Hank, "for interfering with a free catch." He spoke doubtfully, though, suspecting a snag.

"Hold on," exclaimed Nip eagerly. "You said he was on-side!"

"Keep out, you!" Tommy warned. There were chuckles from some of the others and Hank looked harassed.

"How could I be on-side, I'd like to know? Even if I was—"

"Second question," interrupted Tommy. "Your side has the ball ten yards from the opponent's goal line and on the fourth down makes a forward pass over the line. You receive the pass. You stand with one foot on the end line, but the ball reaches you a yard inside the zone and you complete the pass. What about it?"

Hank looked about for aid, but met only grinning countenances. "The ball came down *inside* the zone?" he asked cautiously.

"A yard inside. You have to reach well out for it."

"If I catch it it's all right," said Hank. "You said I had my foot *on* the end line, not *over* it. Anyway, if the ball was inside—"

Ted's chuckle unsettled him, and he scowled his annoyance. "Hang it, I didn't say I could answer all the catch questions you could think of! Just the same, I'll bet I'm right about that. Ain't I, Ted?"

"Third question," said Tommy inexorably.

"Oh, shut up! Answer your own fool questions!"

"Behave, Hank!" admonished Coles. "Put the question, Tommy."

"You're captain of your team, Howard, and the other side has the ball between your fifteen and sixteen yards. One of your side is caught holding and the umpire penalizes you fifteen yards. What would you do?"

"What down was it?" asked Hank, mazed. "I mean, who had the ball?"

"The opponent, on your fifteen and a half. One of your gang is caught holding in the line and the ump socks you the penalty and puts the ball forward fifteen yards from where it was put in play. You're captain of your team. Get it?"

"Sure, but what can I do? The ball still belongs to the other fellow, doesn't it?"

Several of the listeners were exchanging puzzled glances, while Hank's forehead was a network of wrinkles. Of the dozen there only Tommy and Bert appeared serene, Tommy owlishly regarding his victim, Bert leaning back against the window-sill wearing a faintly amused expression. "That your answer?" inquired Tommy.

"Gosh, I don't understand what you're getting at," fumed Hank. "If my side had the ball, all right, but you say it hasn't. What would you expect me to do, anyhow? Sass the umpire?"

"Look here, Tommy," broke in Jim Galvin, "I don't get that any more than Hank does. What's the answer?"

"I'll tell you in a sec. First, how many of the questions did Howard answer correctly?"

"None, so far," said Jim. "He doesn't seem to have answered the last one at all yet."

"Wait a minute!" Hank protested. "What was wrong with the first answer? He asked—"

"You could have caught the ball yourself, Hank, if you were on-side," said Ted. "Shut up a second. What's the catch in the last one, Tommy?"

"Why," Tommy replied sweetly, "if I'd been captain instead of Hank I'd have protested the placing of the ball half a yard from the goal line!"

"Gee, that's right!" exclaimed Chick. "It ought to have gone to the one-yard line! Isn't that right, Tommy?"

From across the hall came an agonized wail of "Cut that out!"

"Right as rain, old dear."

"Oh, thunder," growled Hank disgustedly, "no one's expected to know all the kinks! And, look here, you fellows, what was wrong with that one about the forward-pass into the end zone? I was inside and the ball was inside and I made the catch. I'll bet I answered that one right!"

"No, you didn't, Hank," laughed Ted. "Tommy said you had one foot on the line. Rules say you mustn't do it, see? On or over, either one, queers you, Hank."

"That's crazy! I'll bet the rest of you didn't know it, either! Gee, I'd like to ask you guys a few!"

"Go ahead," advised Pill. "Show 'em up, Hank."

Hank looked grim for a moment, and it was plainly to be seen that he was doing some hard thinking. Then, as expectant silence prolonged itself, a slow grin overspread his face and he shook his head. "No use," he said, chuckling. "I can't think of any!"

"Well, it looks to me as though Tommy had won his point," said Anstruther. "So it behooves us to listen respectfully to his pleasant criticisms of the Team. Go ahead, Tommy, and say your piece."

Tommy shrugged. "I've said it. I said this

year's team was the punkest I've seen here, and I say it again."

"Well, you've seen quite a few," remarked Chick, with a wink at Bert. "How many years have you been here now, anyway, Tommy? This your fourth or fifth?"

"Third," replied Tommy untroubledly amidst the laughter. "I saw last year's team and the team before that, and I'm seeing this thing you've got here now, and I say it ain't so good, fellows. Mind you, I'm saying this for your benefit, not because I want to crab."

"Oh, no, you never crab, Tommy!" said Pill.

"What," asked Coles in a patient voice, "strikes you as being the principal—ah—weakness?"

"The players," replied Tommy promptly, and allowed himself a wicked grin.

A howl of derision went up. Then Coles inquired with a pretense of vast respect: "Are they all rotten, Tommy?"

"Oh, no, there are three or four that look pretty good."

"Thank Heaven!" cried Ted. "We've got something to build on!" Chick, however, demanded scoffingly: "Say, for the love of Pete, who gave you any license to set yourself up as a critic, Tommy? You're nothing but a fat loafer, and you know it. Cramming the football rules doesn't make you a judge of the game, youngster."

Perhaps it was the reference to a tendency toward obesity that got under Tommy's skin. In any case, his cheerful calm vanished and he answered warmly: "If I'm fat, Burton, it's not in my head! And it doesn't take a critic to see what a rotten game you're playing, either!"

"Lay off that stuff, Tommy!" ordered Coles severely.

"So I'm fat-headed am I?" demanded Chick, reddening. "Say, you blamed little fat rotter—" He thrust himself off the bed and took a step toward the window-seat, but Ted interposed.

"Calm yourself, Chick. Tommy doesn't count. Besides, he didn't mean what he said, did you, you crazy ape?"

"Sure, I did," responded Tommy, once more master of his emotions. "He *has* got a swelled head and he *is* playing rotten."

"If you can't act like a gentleman—" began Coles angrily.

"Oh, put him out," called Nip Storer.

Chick, held in subjection by Ted's capable hand —it's difficult to get to your feet when some one is pushing against your chest—glared wrathfully at Tommy. Tommy returned his gaze without a qualm. After all, reflected Bert, beside him, he didn't lack courage!

"I really think you'd better beat it, Tommy,"

advised Ted coldly. "You are a pesky nuisance, anyway, and I don't know who let you in."

"Then he goes, too," said Tommy, nodding at the irate Chick. "He hadn't any call to say I was fat!"

"So you are," declared Chick hotly. "You're a fat fool!"

"Move both members be allowed to withdraw," said Jim Galvin, grinning enjoyably.

"Seconded," said Anstruther. "The secretary is directed to expunge the remarks of both gentlemen—I mean rough-necks—from the records."

"Forget it, you two," advised Ted. "Mutual apologies are in order. How about it, Tommy? If you want to stay, son, you'd better behave."

"Do we get the apples?" asked Tommy soberly.

"Sure," Ted answered amidst laughter.

"I apologize," said Tommy. "Just the same—" But Bert's elbow colliding with his ribs interrupted his qualifying addenda.

"All right," agreed Chick, restored to better humor. "He isn't fat. He's merely plump."

Tommy looked doubtful for a moment, but Coles pulled a box of apples from under a bed and the doubt vanished. During the subsequent half-hour Tommy was much too busy to indulge in what he termed constructive criticism. No one counted the number of Northern Spies he demolished, but it was considerable. Conversation proceeded

briskly but somewhat unintelligibly. In the middle of the feast "Dutch" Kruger arrived, bearing a fat black case, and was hailed tumultuously. He devoured two apples hastily, urged on by impatient watchers, and would have started a third. But Jim Galvin deftly took the apple away from him and substituted the black case. Dutch's protests were drowned. Good-naturedly he produced a shining saxophone.

"'Football Blues,' Dutch!"

"Aye! Attaboy, Dutch! I want to sing!"

"What time is it?" asked Dutch anxiously.

"Only nine. Lots of time, boy. Give us 'The Football Blues.'"

Dutch grinned, nestled the mouthpiece against his lips and blew. At the same time he began to pat the floor with his feet and sway from his hips. The saxophone nodded and curveted. Most of the assemblage broke into song, tapping the floor, too, swaying as Dutch swayed. Tommy, a large red apple in one hand, his eyes staring fixedly, hypnotically at the musician, heaved his plump shoulders ludicrously. From across the hall came an agonized wail of "*Cut that out!*" which, however, failed to make itself heard in Number 5. Up and down the corridor doors were set open and in more than one room a toiler at his books gave over toiling for the while and pursed his lips.

The thing was a composition of Dutch's own,

words and music, and if the rimes wouldn't always bear inspection the tune was enough to make you lenient. "The Football Blues" had made Dutch famous throughout the school and he was much in demand. There were many verses, which recounted the experiences of an ambitious youth essaying to play football, but it was the chorus that made the hit. The saxophone wailed and sobbed and yowled, Dutch's eyes roamed from floor to ceiling, ecstatically bright, and the crowd roared lustily from bodies that swayed and shook.

"They rolled me round in the mud and rain.
When I riz to my feet and yelled with pain
A big guy knocked me flat again!
They kicked my face and punched my nose,
They gouged my eyes and wrenched my toes
And from my back tore all my clothes!
The doctor came and said to me;
'You're as fine a wreck as ever I see!'
They bore me off on a window blind,
But they left a leg and an arm behind.
I wrote to the coach from the hospital:
'I'm going to live, but I'm far from well.
If I don't report, sir, please excuse,
For I've got the Football Black-and-Blues,
The Blues, the Blues, the Black-and-Blues,
I've got the Football Black-and-Blues!'"

They had to have all the verses, which were numerous, and after they were exhausted Dutch

played other melodies and the concert continued until Coles warned that it was nine-thirty and, grabbing another apple or two, the guests went off. On the way to Upton, Chick, recalling his grievance, observed disgustedly: "I don't see why Coles had to have that pesky nuisance there. He's the freshest kid in school. Gosh, some one ought to turn him over and give him a good whaling!"

"Tommy Parish? Yes, he is trying. He seems to love to start an argument and get every one peeved. Funny chap."

"Funny? He's crazy! The next time he gets fresh with me I'll slap his pudgy face, no matter where it is."

"Well, I guess you'd always find it in about the same place," said Bert.

CHAPTER V

TOMMY MAKES A PREDICTION

Bert went to the training table with the more important members of the squad on Wednesday, and, contrary to expectation, Mr. McFadden, Second Team coach, gathered his charges together on Friday and started to whip them into shape. While Bert had not actually feared being released to the Scrub, he nevertheless experienced some relief when Mr. McFadden began operations without him. The removal of the Scrub players from the big squad made quite a difference about the First Team gridiron and practice on Friday seemed more methodical. Bert had a long try-out at halfback during the scrimmage and managed to show speed and clean handling of the ball. But the plays used against the first-string fellows were not of the sort calculated to advantage a light back, no matter how fast, and Bert had small success when carrying the ball. Fitz Savell, who played inside half, did much better, and after work was over Bert tried in vain to believe that he had made an impression on Coach Cade.

Saturday Banning High School came and presented a light but snappy opposition. In the first half the ball was seldom far out of Alton territory,

for Banning had developed a clever passing game last season, by which she had scored twice on the Gray-and-Gold, and hadn't forgotten how to use it this fall. She had, too, a punter who managed to get some five yards more than Nip Storer, who did the kicking in the first half, and as a result of punts and passes Alton was placed on the defensive early and kept there most of the time. Banning failed to score, however, although a difference of a few inches would have converted a failure into a field-goal in the second period.

When the last half began Coach Cade used his second-string players extensively; Kruger and Thomas and Wick at the left of center, Tifton in Captain Lowe's place, Lovell at quarter, Savell and Keys in the half-back positions. Since the first-string men hadn't been able to more than hold the enemy in the first half, there were those among the audience who censured the coach's move. But Johnny had his own notions, and he seldom bothered about what the School thought of his methods. Here was an enemy strong enough to offer real opposition and yet of slight importance as a rival. Usually the early season opponents were unable to provide more than good practice for Alton; were, of course, selected for that reason. But Banning, partly because of having held over some seven or eight of last fall's players, was well advanced, while Alton, for some reason not so easily deter-

mined, was fully a week behind normal development, and what had been looked on as an easy contest had assumed the aspects of a real struggle.

Coach Cade might have worked his best players through three periods and made victory more probable, but he chose to risk defeat in order to give the substitutes a taste of real battle. Since all the first-choice men had played through to the whistle in the first half, they could not be counted on for later aid, and Johnny must needs place full dependence on his lesser heroes. When the third period started he still had Patten at center, Haines at right tackle, Chick Burton at right end, Ted Ball at quarter and Galvin at full-back, all members of the Old Guard, but one by one they retired until by the time the second half was five minutes along second- and third-string players held all the positions. Since Banning was still using or could call on every man who had begun the battle, the odds looked heavily in her favor. But the Alton substitutes were old hands at the game and were not to be dismayed by a high school team, especially a team against which several of them had played last year and defeated, and Bus Lovell, who had taken Ted Ball's place, set about his task with fire and enthusiasm. After Banning had kicked off and Larry Keys had run the ball back nearly twelve yards, Bus began sending Couch back to punting position and running his plays from that forma-

tion. Savell and Keys made good gains outside the tackles and twice Couch tore off fair yardage on wide runs. He was a heavy chap and hard to stop, and usually added two or three strides to his progress after he was tackled. Alton reached the middle of the field without yielding the ball, crossing the center-line finally on a forward pass from Couch to Dutch Kruger that was good for nine yards.

The stand cheered incessantly, wrought to quite a pitch of excitement, and demanded a score. But Keys fumbled a pass and Banning fell on the ball on her forty-seven and the tide of battle flowed the other way until Alton was back on her twenty-eight. There she twice stopped Banning's punches at the line and knocked down a forward-pass. Banning sent her place-kicker back to the thirty-nine yards and, with what breeze there was blowing straight from behind her, looked suddenly dangerous. However, one fumble leads to another, and the ball was never kicked. Whether the fault was the Banning center's or the quarter-back's is immaterial. The pigskin struck the ground before the holder could get his hands on it. After that it was juggled just long enough for Gus Thomas to upset his opponent and arrive on the scene. Thereupon the quarter-back did the sensible thing. He laid himself flat and snuggled the ball to him fondly.

Thirty seconds later Lovell caught a punt on his five-yard line and the Gray-and-Gold started once more toward the distant goal.

If there was one man who stood out above the others in the ensuing march it was Larry Keys, playing right half-back. Only once did he fail to gain when the ball was given to him. He had weight and speed and a nice discrimination in the matter of choosing his outlets. On a play from kick formation in which two backs faked an attack on the right of the line and Larry went outside tackle on the left, with right tackle swinging out and going ahead as interference, he twice made advances of more than ten yards and netted shorter distances until Banning solved the play and stopped it. However, once inside the visitor's forty yards, Alton's advance slowed and staggered, and when two slams at the wings had failed and a forward-pass had grounded, Couch punted from the forty-six.

By that time the fourth quarter was well along and Alton had the light wind behind her. The Banning quarter misjudged the kick, touched the ball without catching it and chased it back toward the goal-line, closely pursued by Dutch Kruger. Pigskin, quarter-back and Dutch arrived simultaneously at the last streak of lime, and when the whistle had blown Alton had scored two points on a safety. The Gray-and-Gold cohorts cheered

and the game paused while the Banning captain made an impassioned plea for a touchback. In the end he was persuaded that the official's verdict was just and the battle waged again. That incident, however, while it gave Alton a score, resulted disastrously in the end. Banning, it seemed, needed but that filip of hard-luck to start her going with a new impetus. Three fresh players were hurried in and Banning bounded away from her thirty-yard line like a runner from his mark. She used one or two new plays that puzzled the adversary until the middle of the field was reached. There a long forward-pass, almost successful, led Alton to playing her backs deeper. Banning switched promptly to short passes and gained her distance on two such, making Alton's thirty-eight yards. Another overhead attempt grounded and Banning tried the left end and got four on a wide run. Inside the thirty-five-yard line she tried a sweep to the left which, while it centered the ball, lost about a yard. On fourth down she staged a placement kick but didn't carry it out. Full-back took the pass and went through inside Hank Howard for all but a foot of the required distance. After the gain had been measured Alton was awarded the pigskin.

With something less than two minutes left, the stand breathed loudly with relief and Coach Cade hustled an assortment of substitutes on. Among these was an entire new backfield: Riding as quar-

ter, Tyron and Parkhurst as halfs and Franklin as full. Obeying instructions, Riding shot Tyron at the Banning left tackle on first down and got two yards. A second attempt, however, yielded nothing, and Riding dropped back to his sixteen yards to punt. Thus far Alton's line had held against all assaults of the enemy during like operations, but this time Banning had her eyes on that goal that loomed so close and put everything into a desperate charge that tore a gaping hole in the right of the Alton line. Riding received a pass that was a bit too low, straightened, turned the ball and started his swing. After that there was much confusion, a confusion of seething forms about a loose ball, for Riding had kicked the pigskin squarely into the body of a charging enemy!

When the whistle blew a Banning player, the undermost of a pile of several, had the ball, and a bare two inches of its scarred surface overlapped Alton's five-yard line. In the stand some four hundred youths stood and frenziedly implored their warriors to *"Hold, Alton!"* But Banning had tasted blood, had liked it and wanted more. Two new linemen were sent galloping on, and then, with less than sixty seconds of playing time remaining, Banning High School took revenge for several years of drubbing at the hands of Alton Academy. It required the full four downs to put that ball over, but over it went finally, while the

timekeeper's watch ticked off the last few seconds, over on a last frenzied surge at the very center of the Gray-and-Gold line from the two yards, with the back who carried the pigskin hurtling his way to victory over the shoulders of the defenders. Little cared Banning that she missed the try-for-point. She had won, 6 to 2. That was glory enough!

The School was disappointed and showed the fact. The applause that almost invariably greeted the players as they sought their table in dining hall was lacking this Saturday evening; or was so faint it merely emphasized the absence of the customary demonstration. The game caused a good deal of discussion, and the consensus of opinion was to the effect that the defeat had been unnecessary and that Coach Cade had, in the popular phraseology, pulled a boner. Of course there were those who stood up for Johnny, and among them was Tommy Parish. As always, Tommy's views met opposition, and, as always, that fact merely spurred him to more brazen assertions. Tommy had the misfortune—for so it was considered at Alton—to sit at a table accommodating not only a number of fellow students but a member of the Faculty, one Mr. Peghorn, who instructed the Junior and Senior classes in physics. However, it must be said that Tommy allowed "Peg's" presence to "cramp his style" very little, while—and

this is a secret between us—Mr. Peghorn, who had taught boys for so long that his enthusiasm was fast wearing thin, seldom lifted his head from above his plate save when Tommy was going well. Then he occasionally darted a frowning glance toward that youth that might have silenced another but that left Tommy untroubled. Perhaps Tommy somehow knew that under that frown, or behind it, Mr. Peghorn was secretly sympathetic. When one has listened to conventional and uninspired table-talk for many years even a jarring note is a relief.

"Trouble with you guys," declared Tommy in that aggravating, assured manner of his, "is that you can't see beyond the end of your noses. You get sore because Coach doesn't win a game that he doesn't care two cents about."

"A game's a game," said the freckle-faced boy across the table.

"And a slice of beef's a slice of beef," retorted Tommy, "but I noticed you were mighty careful not to pick out a little one just now!"

"Just the same," said another fellow above the chuckles rewarding Tommy's sally, "it doesn't look very well, Tommy, to play two games, as we've done, and not win either of them. I say it wouldn't have hurt Johnny to have kept his best men in and put the game on ice. Then he could have tried out his subs if there was time."

"Put the game on ice!" exclaimed Tommy. "*Comment!* Those dumb-bells couldn't put anything on ice, Harry. They're so dead on their feet you could put lilies in their hands without waking 'em! Why, the only chance Johnny had of winning to-day was to put in his third-string players. If he had played his second-string all through he might have tied, but it would have taken the third-string bunch to win!"

"Oh, don't talk like a baked apple," protested some one farther along. "Do you mean to say that Banning could have pushed across for that touchdown if the regulars had been in the line-up? If you do you're cuckoo!"

"*Tres bien, cher ivorie solide.* What happened in the first half when those mighty heroes held forth? They pushed Banning all over the field, *non?* And scored at will, did they not? Listen, you big boob; if the first-string guys had played through the game the score would have been something like twenty-five to a goose-egg. We wouldn't have had even those miserable *deux* points!"

This heresy brought forth a groan of derision. "Tommy, you're a nut!" proclaimed Harry. "You just like to hear yourself talk. I suppose Lovell is a better quarter-back than Ted Ball and Tifton is a better guard than Jonas Lowe! You're all wet, son!"

"Well," answered Tommy judicially, "Jonah

Slow may still have a slight edge on Tif, but Tif's coming along pretty fast. As for Ted Ball, he's the best quarter we've had in three years, but you've got to have more than a quarter-back to make a football team. Even without Ball the backfield that played in the last half was far better than the first combination. Look at Savell! There's a clever lad for you. If he isn't on the 'big time' before I'm much older I'll eat my hat."

"I don't believe you've got one," said Harry. "Savell was all right, but Storer's a heap better. Say, if the second and third bunch are so much better, why doesn't Johnny scrap the first and put them in?"

"I wouldn't be surprised if he did eventually," answered Tommy, helping himself to half of a neighbor's biscuit. "After to-day's game he's probably thinking of it more than ever. Of course he's likely to keep three or four of the first-string crowd. They aren't all rotten. Ted Ball and Billy Haines and Joe Tate and, of course, Captain Jonas, would probably stick. Maybe another."

"You're a crazy coot, Tommy!"

"*Mille remerciements.* I may be crazy, but I'm not foolish. You fellows don't know a thing about football, and I do. That's why you find my remarks incomprehensible."

"Where'd you get your football knowledge?" jeered one of his audience. "Taking tickets?"

"That's all right, you piece of cheese rind," replied Tommy sweetly. "Perhaps between the lot of you you can tell me who the lad is that'll be doing most of the scoring for us by the end of the season. Perhaps you can, and then *encore* perhaps you can't!"

"Nip Storer."

"Jim Galvin."

"He doesn't have to be on the first line-up just now," said Tommy.

"He means Fitz Savell," suggested one.

Tommy shook his head sadly. "I didn't think you could," he murmured.

"Well, who is he?" demanded Harry, with a wink for the table at large. "Any one we've ever heard of?"

"I can't say whether you've heard of him, Harry. His name's Hollins."

"Hollins! You mean Bert Hollins?"

"*Absolument.*"

"Why, that fellow hasn't—isn't—"

"I never said he was," answered Tommy, pushing back his chair and rising superbly for one of his build. "I said he was going to be. Now don't chew the rag about it, pie-face, for it's something you know nothing of. Just remember what I've told you and wait for developments. *Bon soir, vous pauvre noix!*"

CHAPTER VI

MOONEY'S

If the result of the Banning game disappointed the spectators it quite as certainly disgruntled most of the players, the first-string fellows particularly. "Why in heck," was the oft repeated query, "didn't he keep us in and let us score on those dubs? Why, we were just getting to know them!" The explanation that Coach Cade had desired to provide experience for the substitutes, at the cost of an unimportant contest, was accepted but failed to satisfy. To be beaten by Banning High School was viewed rather like a slap in the face!

None of the regulars was any sorer than Chick Burton that evening, and on the way across the campus after supper he did a good deal of grousing, with Bert as a more or less sympathetic audience. Bert appreciated Chick's view-point, but he considered that Mr. Cade had taken an allowable risk, and he tried to point that out to his companion. But Chick refused to see it.

"Johnny's here to help us win games," he asserted stoutly, "and not to make us look like a

bunch of dubs. If he wants to give the subs experience let him do it in practice. We'll give 'em enough experience! If we can't, all he's got to do is run 'em up against the Second. It's all right to save your good men when there's an important game coming, but we play New Falmouth next week and there's six days between, and New Falmouth isn't anything to get worried about, anyway. Why, any one of us regulars could have played four periods to-day and never turned a hair! I was just getting good when he yanked me out. Hang it, after the way those beggars ran us around in the first half, we all wanted a chance to sock it to 'em. Lum Patten was as mad as a hyena about it. I thought sure Johnny would hear him kicking. Rather wish he had, too. Say, I'll bet the Flubdub will have something to say next week!"

The Flubdub was the popular name for the school weekly. Its official title was The Doubleay, but no one called it that.

"Well," remarked Bert, "you had more luck than I had, Chick, even if you didn't play the game through. I just sat on the bench and watched you fellows get trampled on."

"Trampled on nothing!" said Chick indignantly. "You didn't see me get trampled on. Nor the others, either. Suppose Banning did hold us for two periods. We were due for a come-back in

the last half, and a hard one, too! Where do you get that trampled-on stuff?"

"I take it back," laughed Bert. "Just the same, Chick, Banning out-played you, and you know it."

"Why not? Johnny sends us in there with instructions to buck their line and not do any kicking unless forced to. You heard the dope he handed us. Said Banning was fast and shifty and our best bet was to hammer the guards and tackles. Well, he didn't know what he was talking about. Those fellows had a corking good line from end to end and slammed us back every time we tried to smash it. That guy who played opposite to me was a regular man-killer! And look at the pair of guards she had! Looks to me like Johnny had it in for us and wanted to see us knocked cold! Maybe we were slow, like he told us afterwards, but I'll tell the world that it would have taken a mighty good defense to stop that passing game of theirs to-day. We didn't know how to meet it, and that's the truth of it; and I say that wasn't our fault. Johnny should have prepared us for that crazy sort of stuff before we went in. Banning would heave the ball thirty or forty yards and we'd play back to meet it, and then she'd toss one over the middle and make it good for five or six or maybe eight yards before our backs could get in on it. Maybe we were slow, but we were fast enough to rub those guys' faces in the mud if

we'd been allowed to stay in! That's what gets my goat, hang it all: putting in a bunch of measly scrubs just when things got interesting and we were all set to go!"

"Fitz Savell played a nice game," observed Bert rather wistfully.

"Oh, sure, but the rest of them just flubbed around. Look at the chance they had to score when they were down near the thirty that time! And look at the play Bus Lovell called for! Say, who was in charge after Jonas quit, anyway?"

"Bus, I think."

Chick snorted. "I'll bet he was. Any one else would have made him change that play down there. Just handed them the very thing they were looking for! Played right into their hands! Why, a child could have seen that they were all set for that forward-pass!"

"I fancy the trouble," said Bert, "was that Bus didn't have much of a choice of plays."

"What of it? He needn't have thrown the ball away. Savell had been gaining right along, making his own holes, pretty near. Why didn't Bus shift his line over and use a double-pass that would have given Fitz a chance to slip around tackle on the short side? We only needed about five yards. Anyway, suppose he didn't have the plays? Whose fault is that? Johnny ought to have given us enough to lick those guys to a fraz-

zle. Beaten by a high school team! Blamed nonsense!"

Chick relapsed into injured silence and they crossed West street, a block from the campus, and turned to the right in the direction of Mooney's. Bert hadn't much desire to spend the evening in a billiard parlor, but Chick had pleaded hard and he had yielded. "You don't have to play," asserted Chick. "I just want you to come along and see me trim that Devore guy. He's got a licking coming to him after what he did to me Wednesday!"

"I'm to be the cheering section, eh?" Bert had asked. "Well, all right. But understand, Chick, that this has got to be an early party. Ten o'clock sees this little golden head on the pillow, and that means quitting the festivities by nine-thirty."

"Sure, that's all right. I'll win two straight to-night. I'm in the mood to conquer, old scout! They wouldn't let me lick Banning and I've just got to beat up some one!"

Mooney's wasn't the disreputable place that Bert pleased to pretend. It was large, well-appointed and clean. There were fourteen tables on the long floor and when the two boys entered every one was in use. Bert hoped for an instant that the fact would turn his companion back toward the door and spare him some two hours of unenthusiastic watching in the smoke-filled hall. But Chick

was undisturbed, and led the way along the aisle to where, near the back of the room, two youths were playing bottle pool. They were probably about twenty-three or four years of age, one a lanky fellow with long freckled face, the other a smaller, neatly-built chap with a face that might have been very good-looking if the features had been less peaked. He had rather colorless, small eyes, set too close together, and Bert took a mild dislike to Mr. Devore long before he discovered, as he did subsequently, that the gentleman's first name was Lester. The game ended abruptly and Bert shook hands with the two. The freckle-faced fellow, who was introduced as Joe Mills, proposed a four-handed game, but neither Chick nor Devore seconded the proposal, and Bert flatly declined. Joe wandered off presently and Bert saw him no more that evening.

Chick explained to Devore at some length what he intended to do to that gentleman, and Devore pretended much concern, turning, however, to wink at Bert, who had established himself in one of the chairs ranged along the wall. Chick had quite recovered his spirits and was even in a rather expansive mood. The game started and Bert made himself as comfortable as he could and looked on. Devore was a presentable chap, neatly dressed in inexpensive clothes of the sort usually labeled "Varsity" or "Campus" and which are uni-

versally taboo at colleges. He wore a ring on one hand which might—or might not—have been a diamond, smoked cigarettes incessantly and talked cheerfully in a pleasant voice, using much slang, and an occasional oath when luck went against him. Luck didn't do that very often, however, for Devore was a good player, using his cue with unconscious dexterity and seeming never in doubt as to what to do. Evidently he was no stranger to Mooney's, for he exchanged salutations frequently. If Chick had not been a good player, too, that first game of fifty points wouldn't have lasted long. As it was, however, it stretched out interminably, or so it seemed to Bert; although he did find interest in the last few minutes, when Devore overcame Chick's lead of eight and ran out the game.

Chick took the defeat smilingly, but Bert could see that he was piqued. "I'll play you for double this time, Les," he announced. Devore appeared to hesitate, but he finally nodded. "You're on, Buddie," he agreed.

Chick won the second game rather handily. Apparently his adversary was not as steady a performer as Bert had believed him, for several times he fell down on shots that were not particularly difficult. His good humor, however, never deserted him; wherein he differed from Chick. Chick could be as gay as a lark while winning, but if Devore got the lead his banter ceased and he looked on in

frowning, anxious silence. A miscue or a stroke of ill-luck invariably produced a word or gesture of annoyance from Chick. At such times Devore was loudly sympathetic.

At the end of the second game Chick was again in high spirits. "Come on now for the rubber," he said. "What about it? Same stakes?"

"You must want to ruin me," laughed Devore. "I'm no Millionaire Kid. I have to work for my coin. Still, I'd like to quit even, so I'll go you, Buddie."

"You haven't got time, Chick," Bert protested. "It's four after nine now."

"Oh, we'll hurry it up this time," Chick laughed. "It won't take me long to beat this easy-mark!"

"Remember what you agreed," said Bert. "Nine-thirty was the limit."

"Make it twenty-five points," Devore suggested. "I'm agreeable. I want to hit the hay early myself to-night."

Chick consented, although not very cheerfully, and the third game began. Devore won the break and cleaned the table very neatly, winning grudging admiration from Bert. Chick went well for a while, only to miss an easy shot, and Devore pocketed the remaining balls. After the next break, Devore, with the game practically won, scratched, and Chick ran seven before over-anxiety caused his Waterloo. Bert had never seen Chick

so concerned about the winning of a game of pool as he was now, and he wondered. The miss had put him in a black temper, and he sat slumped in a chair while Devore expertly and almost apologetically ran out, taking the winning ball on a double bank.

"Tell you what I'll do," exclaimed Chick impetuously. "I'll play you just one more of twenty-five for two dollars! Come on now if you're a sportsman! What do you say?"

Devore shook his head. "No, sir, I'm through, Buddy. I know when I'm well off, see? I had luck that time, but—"

"Afraid, eh?" asked Chick. "I'll say you had luck! Come on, don't be a quitter!"

Devore smiled but shook his head again, returning his cue to its locked box. "Honest, I've got to beat it, Chick. So have you. I'll play you again Monday night. How's that?"

"What time is it, anyway?" Chick looked at his watch and shrugged disappointedly. "Oh, all right. Monday night then. Better bring your horse-shoe along again, old man, for I'm going to show you some real pool! Let's settle up."

"Outside," said Devore. "Mooney's sort of strict, and what he don't know won't hurt him."

Bert followed them down the hall, dodging the butts of busy cues, through an atmosphere thick

with tobacco smoke. Chick stopped at a desk and paid his score and then they were outside and Bert drew a long breath of the cool air with vast relief. Chick peeled a dollar from a small wad of bills and Devore carelessly thrust it into a pocket. "Well, good night, you guys," he said. "See you Monday night, Chick?"

"You bet you will, you lucky coot," replied Chick. "Good night!" Bert set a fast pace toward school, for it was well after the half-hour, and since the sidewalks were still crowded with the usual Saturday night throng, progress was slow and conversation difficult. It wasn't until they had reached the comparatively empty stretch of State street that Chick voiced his disgust. "If you hadn't been so keen on getting back," he declared, "I'd have beaten that game. You don't get a chance when you're playing only twenty-five points and the other fellow has the first break. I'd be three dollars to the good instead of a dollar out; nearly two dollars out counting what I had to pay at the desk!"

"Mean to say you were playing for two dollars a game?" asked Bert incredulously.

"Sure; that is the last two games. We only had a dollar on the first. We never played for more than a dollar before, and I guess Les was sort of scared. Gosh, that fellow had luck to-night, didn't he?"

"He seems to be a pretty clever lad at it," said Bert.

"Oh, he plays a good game, all right," assented Chick, "but he makes some pretty punk shots, too; generally when he can't afford it. In the pinches he gets kind of nervous, I guess."

"Do you usually beat him?" asked Bert.

"Yes. Well, anyway, I win oftener than he does. He has his lucky nights, like to-night."

"Seems to me, Chick, two dollars is a good deal to play for, supposing you've got to bet at all. What's the idea? You and I always have plenty of sport with nothing up except the price of the game."

"Oh, well, a fellow plays better if he has a bet up. He started it. Offered to bet me a quarter one night and I took him up. Then I came back at him with fifty cents and then, first thing I knew, we were playing for a dollar. Well, if he can stand it I can, I guess. Bet you he doesn't make more than twenty a week."

"I wish you'd cut out the betting," said Bert. "You can have just as good fun, Chick. Besides, if Faculty heard about it—"

"Pshaw, don't be a Woeful Willy, Bert! How the dickens would Faculty get hep? Besides, there's no school rule saying you mustn't bet a dollar on a game of pool, is there?"

"No, I never heard of one," owned Bert, "but

Faculty has a way of making rules at short order. Mind shaking a leg a bit? It's twelve minutes to ten. If I were you, Chick, I'd play less pool, anyway. Two or three nights a week is sort of overdoing it, isn't it?"

"Why is it? Might as well be doing that as sitting around in the room. There's nothing wrong with Mooney's place, is there? You saw what it was like to-night."

"N-no, there's nothing wrong with it, I guess; except that a lot of betting goes on there and the crowd isn't exactly the sort a fellow would pick out to spend an evening with."

"Pshaw, the crowd's all right. Just because they don't happen to be our sort doesn't mean anything, Bert. Take Les Devore, now. Of course he isn't a college fellow, and all that sort of tosh, but he's a mighty decent guy, just the same. Works hard for his living and gets his fun playing a little pool."

"What does he work at?" asked Bert.

"Railroading. He's something over at the freight yard, I believe. Why?"

"I just wondered. His hands don't look as if he did an awful lot of work, Chick."

"Great Scott, I didn't say he handled freight! He probably works in the office. Some sort of a clerk, I dare say. I guess you don't like him, from the way you talk."

"I don't know enough about him," replied the other evasively. "I'll own up, though, old chap, that I wasn't strangely attracted to him this evening."

"What was wrong with him?" demanded Chick irritably.

"For one thing, he plays too good a game of pool. I wouldn't be surprised, Chick, if you found out that playing pool is Devore's real work."

"Forget it! He doesn't play as well as I do, and you can't say that I make a—a profession of it!"

"He doesn't yet," answered Bert as he followed his companion up the steps of the dormitory, "but I have a hunch that that bird is going to improve fast!"

"Is, eh? Well, he isn't going to improve any faster than I do," replied Chick, with a comfortable laugh. "Come along Monday night and watch me pick the pin feathers off him!"

"No, thanks, I've had all the smoke I can stand for six months. Wonder why it's against the law to ventilate a billiard hall!"

"Gosh, you're getting as pernickety as an old maid!" jeered Chick. "Tobacco smoke's good for you, old scout. Keeps the moths out of your system, and all that."

"What do you think I am?" laughed Bert. "A parlor rug?"

Bert beat the clock and was in bed when its

hands pointed to ten. Chick undressed more leisurely, reviewing his and his adversary's performance, and was still solicitously slicking down his hair when the fateful hour was announced by the booming of the church bell across the campus.

"Orders," remarked Bert, good-naturedly ironic, "don't mean anything in your life, do they, Charles?"

"Orders? Oh, that! Listen to me, son. Johnny's got to square himself for what he did this afternoon before I put myself out obeying any orders of his. Say, I hope to goodness the Flubdub hauls him over the coals for losing that game!"

"He should worry," yawned Bert.

CHAPTER VII

BERT GOES THROUGH

The Flubdub did about what Chick wanted it to do. That is to say, it didn't haul Coach Cade over the coals, as Chick put it, but it certainly expressed its disapproval in unmistakable terms in an editorial article which ran all down the first column and turned the next. It wasn't rude, of course; the Flubdub was never that; but it let the world know that it was disappointed in the outcome of the Banning game, that in its judgment a blunder had been made and that Coach Cade had made it. Then it intimated that possibly the coach had acted under a misapprehension, and, in case he had, it proceeded to set him right.

"While it is true," remarked the paper, "that the Kenly Hall game is the important event on the schedule, and the one by which we measure the Team's success, yet there must be a limit to the sacrifices we are willing to make to insure a triumph over the ancient rival. We are not satisfied to witness a series of early season defeats even if assured that a final victory awaits us. Nor do we consider that the loss of early season contests

can have sufficient bearing on the ultimate success of the Team to warrant them. We are better pleased with a policy which accepts each succeeding adversary as a worthy foe and not merely as a stepping-stone to a distant goal. While the danger of over-confidence is recognized, yet there is also an equal peril in lack of confidence. A team which is frequently beaten may easily develop an inferiority complex. A firm belief in its ability to conquer is a valuable asset for any team, and to convince a team that it possesses that ability it must be allowed to win an occasional game. Another aspect also deserves consideration. A reputation for success in athletics is a magnet which draws many students to a school, and in this age of publicity such a reputation must be earned, not merely claimed. While we of Alton may be satisfied to consider as successful a football team which defeats Kenly Hall in November, irrespective of how many games it has lost beforehand, others will judge that team by its season's record, and if that record includes several defeats by minor adversaries our satisfaction will not prevent those others from considering our Football Team a failure. And the Doubleay believes with them that such a team is a failure, for there is no gainsaying that the victor's laurels must go to the team which wins often and decisively, and not to the team which merely conquers once. All of which is re-

spectfully submitted for the consideration of those in authority."

"That ought to hold Johnny awhile," chuckled Chick after a perusal of the editorial. "And Homer's dead right about it, too."

"Homer Johnson?" asked Bert. "Think he wrote it?"

"Of course he did. It sounds just like him. Homer waves a wicked quill!"

"Well," said Bert slowly, "I'm not so sure that Johnny deserves that lecture. Being a football coach can't be exactly a bed of roses, Chick, and it seems to me the least the School can do is refrain from butting in and making his job harder than it is. They say Johnny's going to quit this fall, anyway, and you know blame well he isn't going to pass up any chances to make his last season a successful one. He will bring off a win over Kenly if it's humanly possible."

"And that's just the point," replied Chick, slapping the paper for emphasis. "He's working for a win over Kenly and letting us get licked all along the line! That's what Homer's kicking about; and what we're all kicking about. A Kenly victory is big stuff, and all that, and we sure want it, but, hang it, Bert, we don't want to be licked by every two-bit school we take on. And high schools, too!"

"You mustn't speak so disrespectfully of high

schools, Charles. There are plenty of them that could lick us to a standstill. Besides, you exaggerate. Only one high school has beaten us so far."

"Well, Southport isn't much better," grunted Chick. "And we play New Falmouth High day after to-morrow, and there's no knowing what Johnny Cade has doped up for us!"

"I guess we won't have much trouble with her."

"We won't if we're allowed to trim her," said Chick. "But if Johnny tries another of his funny tricks, like starting with the subs, there's no telling. The first year I was here New Falmouth came mighty near beating us. I forget the score, but I think it was 7 to 6. We kicked a goal after touchdown and she didn't."

"I wish Johnny would let me in Saturday," sighed Bert.

"Maybe he will. I wouldn't be surprised if he left the first-string at home and just took the subs along!"

"You seem to have it in for Johnny rather hard, Chick."

"Oh, well, he made me mad last week. Yanked me out just when I was learning how to handle that big Banning tackle. Johnny is all right when he doesn't get foolish. As for his quitting this fall, I don't believe there's anything in that, Bert. Why would he? He gets a mighty good salary

here and I don't believe any other school is after him."

"As I understand it," responded Bert, "he's going to give up coaching. He has a law practice somewhere, I think, and he wants to get busy with it. I suppose football coaching doesn't lead to anything. How much salary does he draw, Chick?"

"Five, or so I've heard. I guess no one knows but he and the Faculty."

"Five thousand! Great Peter! Why, that's real money!"

"I'll say so; for only three months in the year! Still, I guess it keeps a fellow from doing much of anything else. Take a law business. What good's a lawyer if he isn't around when you want him, eh? Of course, if a coach gets big money, like some of them, they don't have to worry about any other business, I suppose. Some of the college coaches draw down ten thousand."

"Gosh!" breathed Bert. "Guess I'll be a football coach when I get through eddicatin' myself."

"You'll have to learn to play first," chuckled the other.

"I suppose so, but I don't see how I'm to do that if Johnny doesn't use me once in a while. I'm not so certain that I wouldn't rather be on the Scrub, Chick. You do get to play there, even if it's only against you dubs!"

"You'll get your chance all right," Chick answered. "Next year will be your big year, old scout. Just hold your horses and do the best you know how. You oughtn't to kick, anyhow, Bert. You've made the Team and won your letter already, and that's more than some fellows do before their senior year."

"I know, but what's it get me? I'll trade that old letter any time for a half-hour in a real game! I'm getting sort of tired of adorning that unsympathetic bench and only getting into a scrimmage when every one else has been used up."

" 'He also serves,' quoted Chick, 'who only—' "

"Serve be blowed," interrupted Bert shortly. "I want to play football! Sitting and waiting isn't so good. I'd like a little fun and a little glory, Chick."

"You'd have had it if I'd been elected," said Chick.

"Whether I deserved it or not, eh?" laughed the other.

"That's all right," answered Chick, with dignity. "I'd have looked after you. Where's my French Comp?"

"You've got your elbow on it, unless my eyes deceive me. Speaking of that obnoxious language, Chick, have you heard the new one Tommy Parish got off the other day?"

"What's that little fat shrimp kicking about

now?" asked Chick, opening his book under the light.

"Oh, this was just some of his French that he's always springing. He was over at practice; Monday, I guess; and when Pete Ness made that nice run Tommy gets up and yells *'Garcon, allez vous en!'* "

"Allez vous— What did he mean?"

"Well," laughed Bert, " 'Attaboy' was the way he translated it!"

"He's a blamed fool," growled Chick. "They ought to keep him away from practice. He's always making a nuisance of himself with his smart-aleck stuff. Next time he razzes me I'll climb into the stand and cuff his ears!"

"Oh, he's harmless," said Bert. "Trying sometimes, I'll admit, but a distinct addition to the joy of nations. Shut up and let me work out this plaguy problem.

" 'I like readin' an' jographee,
Writin', too, but, hully gee,
Stuff they calls arithmatic
'S enough to make a feller sick!' "

"Wish you had this French to do," moaned the other.

Presumably Mr. Cade saw that editorial in the school paper, but if he did he didn't allow it to affect his policy in the least. On Saturday he be-

gan sprinkling his first and second substitutes through the team soon after the third period started. The score was then 14 to 10 in Alton's favor, New Falmouth having proved rather better than expected. To be sure, the latter's first score came as the result of a fumble by Ness, but the youth who had recovered the ball on the home team's forty-three yards deserved his touchdown, for he skillfully eluded three of the enemy and fairly snatched himself from the grasp of Hop Meecham, who had made a gallant chase and who tackled just short of the five-yard line. New Falmouth added a point to that touchdown and subsequently dropped a goal from Alton's twenty-eight yards.

Alton's own scores came as the result of a considerably better offense than she had shown heretofore. The backs worked well together and the line was charged hard and fast. Galvin shot through for Alton's first score some six minutes after the kick-off and Nip Storer ran the visitor's left wing for the second just before the half ended. Nip also kicked both goals. A third score almost resulted when, in the second quarter, the New Falmouth quarter fumbled a punt and Chick fell on it near the fifteen-yard line. Two attacks at the line, however, gained but four yards and Ted Ball's heave to Chick grounded. On a kick formation Nip Storer threw straight across center, but

Joe Tate was not in position and the ball went to the enemy. Alton impressed the spectators as at least thirty per cent better than New Falmouth, even if results didn't prove it. There was still something lacking in Alton's attack; perhaps several things; but the power appeared to be there. The left of the line was weak and New Falmouth romped through Meecham and Dozier several times. The latter, at tackle, was a comparatively easy problem for the opposing backs. The balance of the line showed well on defense, Lum Patten, at center, being an especially bright spot. Joe Tate and Chick Burton were both fast under punts and were generally on hand when the ball was caught. Chick, however, still showed uncertainty in the matter of tackling, and more than once an enemy wriggled away and made yardage after Chick reached him.

Mr. Cade started his substitutes in almost with the kick-off of the second half, and before the third period was well along only four regulars remained in the line-up. There was, of course, a murmur of disapproval from the stand, but the game was so evidently Alton's for the taking that censure was light. For a period of perhaps five minutes New Falmouth caused uneasiness in the home camp, for she took the ball on steady rushing from her own forty-yard line to Alton's thirty-two before she was halted. There Gus Thomas, playing left

tackle, nailed a New Falmouth back behind his line for a six-yard loss, and the misfortune broke the enemy's stride. An attempt at a forward heave went bad, a wide run was smeared for no gain and when, on fourth down, a courageous youth tried to lift the ball over the bar by the place-kick route from the forty-six yards the attempt was foredoomed. The pigskin fell many yards short and into Fitz Savell's eager arms, and Fitz dodged and wormed his way to his own twenty-two before he was downed. That advance was New Falmouth's final bolt, and never again did she make a first down.

Alton scored a third touchdown after some twelve minutes of play, Couch going through the enemy's center from her six yards. Bus Lovell missed the try-for-point. Again, in the last quarter, Fitz Savell brought the crowd to its feet with with a long run from mid-field that put the pigskin on New Falmouth's seven yards. Bert was in then, having just taken Keys' place at right half, and it was to Bert that Bus Lovell shot the ball on the first down. The play was from balanced line and Bert carried between the enemy right tackle and right end. As those men were double teamed, and as Fitz went ahead as interference, Bert shot through cleanly and kept his feet to the one yard. There he was simultaneously tackled by the opposing full-back and quarter, but he man-

aged to get the ball over the line before he was borne back. Again Bus failed to kick the goal.

The game ended some two minutes later, the score 26 to 10, and Bert went off the field with the rest of the squad, after a somewhat breathless cheer for the adversary, striving hard not to show the elation he felt. Since that was the first touchdown he had ever scored against an outside team, disguising his pleasure wasn't easy. He found himself grinning several times on the way to the gymnasium and straightened his mouth hastily, hoping none of the others had seen. Chick, again rather disgruntled because he hadn't been allowed to play more than slightly over two periods, smote Bert on the back as they entered the building.

"Good stuff, old scout!" he declared. "That was a nice little scamper of yours. You're a credit to my training."

Bert smiled in as off-handed a manner as he could manage. "No one could have failed on that play," he answered. "That hole was as wide as a barn door, Chick. Gus Thomas and Bus put out the tackle, and Couch—"

"Save your breath. I saw the play. I didn't say you worked a miracle, did I? Just the same, you delivered the goods. And you got off so fast you blame near overran your interference, too! If that tackle hadn't been playing too far in he could have smeared it easy. You want to watch

out for that, Bert. Keep behind your interference, even if it slows you up. If you don't you'll mess the play."

Later there was another word of commendation, this time from Mr. Cade. And, as before, it contained a warning. "You got through very prettily, Hollins, on that off-tackle play," he said, "but you must be careful another time to let your interference reach the line well ahead of you. You were much too close on Savell. A good deal depends on timing yourself right, Hollins." Mr. Cade smiled and turned away and Bert went on to the showers, not quite so pleased with himself.

"Some one," he reflected as he squirmed under the spray, "is always taking the joy out of life! Still, I guess he's right. I did hustle Savell a bit. Pshaw, there's nothing to get high-hat about. It just happened to be the right sort of a play for me. I'm too light to do anything unless I have three or four other fellows helping me! I wish I weighed thirty pounds more, gosh ding it! Besides, what made that play easy was that New Falmouth expected Fitz would get the ball and were watching him to hit the other side. Trouble with me is I have to have a skirmish party go ahead of me and clean out the woods before I can get through!"

CHAPTER VIII

EXPERT ADVICE

As a result of these and similar cogitations he went to supper in a chastened frame of mind and refused to accept any of the clapping that greeted his appearance in dining hall as a personal tribute. Then, afterwards, emerging alone, he ran into Tommy Parish in the corridor and Tommy nailed him. Tommy, although he had recently finished a hearty supper, was munching salted peanuts without evident effort. He held out the small packet to Bert, but the latter shook his head.

"Won't let you?" asked Tommy.

"I guess so, but I'm full up."

Tommy observed him with patent incredulity. "After that chow?" he asked jeeringly. "Yes, you are! Better have some. They're fresh." Then, as Bert again declined: "Say, you got your oar in at last, didn't you?" he asked.

"Got my oar in? What are you talking about, Tommy?"

"Why, this afternoon. Pshaw, I knew you'd show them how it's done if they'd let you. And you did, too, Bertie. Yeah, you pulled off something rather neat. I've been watching you right

along; ever since last fall. Been expecting you'd bust in before this, but I guess you've got some pretty fair guys to run against. Savell, for instance. He's good. I said he was first time I saw him play. Just like with you, Bert. I generally manage to pick the winners!"

"Are you trying to tell me that I'm a winner?" laughed Bert. Tommy emptied the remaining peanuts from the sack to his mouth and contented himself with a nod. "You're a humorist, Tommy. Going my way?"

Tommy nodded again and fell into step. "You're right about Fitz Savell, though," said Bert warmly. "Fitz is a winner and no mistake. Wasn't that a corking run of his to-day? Gee, but that fellow can twist!"

"Sokayou," said Tommy.

"Come again?"

Tommy swallowed convulsively and obliged. "So can you, I said. Listen. Savell's mighty good, Bert, but he isn't a bit better than you are. Only thing is, he's getting a chance to show and you aren't. Say, know what I told the fellows at our table the other night? Well, I told them that by the end of the season you'd be the guy who'd be doing most of our scoring."

"Me!" Bert looked searchingly at his companion's countenance, but he failed to detect sarcasm therein. Instead, Tommy appeared to be

quite serious, even earnest. "What did the other fellows do?" inquired Bert. "Hoot?"

"Oh, they didn't believe it," replied Tommy easily. "But we should worry, eh?"

Bert laughed, not amusedly but with slight irritation. "You may mean well, Tommy," he said, "but I rather wish you wouldn't make crazy remarks like that, if you don't mind. It makes me look rather an ass, you know."

Tommy's slightly protuberant eyes expressed perplexity. "How do you mean, ass?" he inquired. "How do you mean, crazy remarks? How do you mean—"

"I mean that fellows might think that I agreed with you, of course," answered Bert, grinning in spite of himself. "I don't want to look like a conceited fool, Tommy."

"Mean you don't agree with me? Mean you don't know you're a cracking good player? Pouf, you're stringing me! Why, I sized you up a long time ago, Bert. 'There,' I said to myself, 'is a lad that's going to show 'em some football before very long!' Yes, sir, I generally manage to pick the winners. I don't play the game myself; I tried it once but I wasn't built just according to specifications; but that doesn't keep me from seeing what's going on and what's coming off. I sized you up for a clever running back the first time I saw you in action. That was last fall when you were on

the Scrub Team, Bert. Why, I haven't missed a practice session since I came here, hardly! Fellows say I'm fresh and shoot off my mouth." Tommy shrugged, looked regretfully at the rumpled sack he still held and tossed it in the general direction of the rubbish barrel at the corner of Upton. "Maybe I do, but some one's got to tell the truth! Take Johnny Cade now. He's too easy. Say, know something? Well, if I was coach of this team, or any other team, for that matter, I'd see that fellows jumped when I spoke to 'em. Yes, sir, when I said 'Hep!' they'd hep! Johnny's too —too soft. Oh, I know he can be rough if he wants to, but that isn't the trick. Fellows are naturally lazy, Bert. You've got to prod 'em all the time if you're going to get 'em to pull. Johnny doesn't prod. He just says 'Gee' or 'Haw' and the whole crowd move about as fast as a yoke of oxes—oxen, I mean. That's where I come in and do my little stunt, see? When I catch a fellow soldiering I get after him, you bet. They don't like it, of course. Let 'em not!" Tommy smiled comfortably. "It's for their own good. They offer to punch my nose and knock my block off and all that, but I notice they don't do it. They know mighty well that when I say they're rotten they are rotten!"

Bert paused on the steps of Upton and stared at Tommy with a new interest. Tommy, feeling un-

successfully about his pockets for further provender, gazed complacently across the twilit campus. Yielding to an impulse, Bert asked: "Doing anything, Tommy?"

"No, I guess not. I did think of going to the movie, but it's one of those vamp pictures, and they make me sick."

"Come on up to the room then and tell me more about it," invited the other.

"About what? Got anything good up there?"

"Great Scott, you're not still hungry!"

Tommy grinned. "Pouf, I'm never really hungry, I guess, but I can generally eat."

"You mean you do generally eat," laughed Bert. "Maybe I can dig up something to keep life in your poor thin body. Come on."

"I haven't been in here for a long time," said Tommy as he selected the easiest chair and relaxed with a sigh. "You and Chick still hit it off? He'd get on my nerves mighty quick, I guess. He's what I call a hard frost."

"Chick's a fine chap when you know him," said Bert. "He and I have been friends a long time."

"Meaning I'm to quit throwing off on him, eh? Oh, all right. He's not bad, even if he is trying to see how rotten he can play."

"Rot," replied Bert warmly. "Chick's doing as well as any fellow on the team, Tommy, and you know it."

"You're a liar," responded Tommy sweetly, "and *you* know it! Ever since he got thrown down at the election last winter he's been as sore as a boil, and ever since he started to play football last month he's been just passing the time. I'm not the only one who knows it, either, if you don't—or pretend you don't. Johnny's got his number, believe me! Some fine day Chick's going to wake up and find himself on the outside looking in!"

"Nonsense," muttered Bert. But he was uneasily conscious that there might be some truth in Tommy's prediction. Chick had been rather poor this fall, and it was scarcely possible that Coach Cade hadn't noted the fact. Bert tossed a half-emptied box of drug-store candy into Tommy's lap and, because the other had jarred him, said irritably: "Go ahead and kill yourself, you silly pig!"

Tommy removed the lid and peered dubiously into the box. "Not much chance of killing myself with what's here," he stated derisively. "Have some?"

"No, thanks." Bert sat down at the study table and thoughtfully rolled a pencil between his palms. "Rather a thankless job, yours, Tommy. I mean fellows don't take kindly to your criticism, eh?"

Tommy shrugged, crossed his knees and regarded a chocolate disapprovingly. Beyond a doubt it had been confined too long in that box!

"If you mean I'm not popular, you're right. But popularity never got any one anything much. Look at History. Men who really did things, men who won success, were unpopular. Look at—at Cæsar, and Napoleon and Lincoln and—"

"Your examples are not so good, Tommy," Bert laughed. "The gentlemen you refer to were rather unfortunate in the end, weren't they?"

"What of it? They did big things while they were alive. If you're one of these popular, well-liked guys about all you get is a slap on the back. When there's a real plum to be handed out the popular guy takes tickets at the door. Every one likes him fine, but when there's a big job to be done no one even sees him. The job goes to some roughneck who has so many enemies he has to carry a gun! No, sir, being liked is a handicap, Bert. If you want to be something and get somewhere talk rude, step on folks' toes and get yourself hated. It's the surest way."

"Tommy, you certainly get hold of some funny notions," said Bert, half admiringly. "It must take a lot of your time to think them up."

Tommy waved a hand carelessly. "I like to think," he said. "Most fellows don't. When you call my ideas funny, though, you just mean that they don't happen to be yours. That's typical of your class, Bert. Anything strange—I mean unfamiliar—you call funny."

"My class? Meaning the Junior?"

"No, class in society." Tommy rejected an unpromising piece of candy and searched farther. "Wealthy and conservative, you know. Hide-bound New England. All that sort of thing."

"I'm New England, if you like," agreed Bert, amused, "but I'm not exactly wealthy, and I do hope I'm not hide-bound. That doesn't sound comfortable. Aren't you New England yourself, you crazy coot?"

"No. I live there, but that's all. We're from Western New York originally. My father's folks were Welsh and my mother's Irish."

"I might have known there was Irish in you," said Bert. "That's how you come to like a scrap so well, Tommy."

"I don't like scraps. You never saw me pick a quarrel yet. No one ever did. Sometimes fellows resent what I say to 'em, but that's their fault."

"You came pretty close to having a scrap on your hands the other night over in Coles Wistar's room," Bert reminded him dryly.

"What of it? I didn't start it. Chick called me a fat loafer, didn't he? Then I said he was playing a rotten game of football, which was the gospel truth, and he got on his ear! He's short-tempered, that guy."

On the heels of that assertion Chick hurried into the room, looked surprised to see who the

visitor was and said, "Hello, Tommy," not very enthusiastically before turning to Bert. "Coming along?" he asked.

"Mooney's? I think not, Chick."

"Thought you said you would. You can change your mind quicker than any fellow I ever saw! Where'd you get to after supper? I wanted you to go over to Jim Galvin's. Well, if you won't come, all right. I've got to hurry."

"Hope you have luck," said Bert as Chick found a cap and stuck it on the back of his head.

"Well, it's about time I did," rejoined Chick as he opened the door. "See you later, old scout."

"Mooney?" asked Tommy, when Chick had departed. "Who's he?"

"Oh, just a fellow who lives in town. Bert goes to see him now and then."

Tommy accepted the explanation, but a close observer would have suspected that it didn't altogether satisfy him. He laid the now empty box on the window-seat with a sigh of mingled regret and repletion, stretched his rather pudgy legs out and then startledly clapped a hand to the back of his neck. He wiggled his head sidewise several times, and then up and down, while Bert gazed at him in puzzlement. Finally he sighed again, this time with pure concern, and murmured: "Darn the luck! Another Job!"

"Another what?" asked Bert.

"Job. That's what I call them," explained Tommy, evidently very low in his mind. "Job had 'em, you know."

"Had what?" Bert was still in the dark.

"Gee, don't you read your Bible?" asked Tommy irritably. "Boils, of course! I'm always having 'em. Makes me sick. I'll bet it's the water here."

"You don't suppose eating so much has anything to do with it?" Bert inquired innocently. "Candy and peanuts and that sort of stuff?"

Tommy shook his head cautiously, once more extending an exploring hand to the back of his neck. "I don't believe so," he replied soberly. "I tried dieting once. Didn't eat any candy for a whole month. But it didn't make any difference. I had Jobs just the same. I guess it's the water, maybe, or something. Guess I'd better go up and put stuff on it."

"Too bad," said Bert as sympathetically as he could manage. "I hope you won't get it."

"Oh, I'll get it," answered the other resignedly. "I always do." Then, more cheerfully, he added: "Anyway, I won't have Gym class for a while!"

At the door Bert stopped him. "By the way, Tommy, I wish you'd tell me something." Tommy paused, turned and, holding a hand to the incipient boil, looked inquiring. "What you said about my

playing," went on Bert with some embarrassment. "You didn't really mean it, eh?"

"What do you care if I did or didn't?" asked Tommy, suddenly a pessimist. "You're like all the others. Think I don't know anything about football just because I don't play it."

"No, honestly, Tommy, I don't think that. Fact is, I believe you know a lot about it. That's why I'd like to know whether you really think I'll make a player. You see, I've tried pretty hard, but I don't seem to do as well as most of the others."

"Huh," said Tommy, evidently mollified, "you're a player right now. Say, want to know how to break into fast company right away? All right, I'll tell you." Tommy lowered his voice, glancing left and right along an empty corridor, and became gravely confidential. "Don't put your head down, Bert. Keep it up and use your eyes. Look for the opening. Sometimes it isn't where it ought to be, you know. All right. If you look sharp you can find it. If you put your head down and just follow the interference blind you run into a snag half the time. Get the idea? Look where you're going! *Employer la oeil, mon ami! Aussi, chercher la trou!* Thanks for the feed. Night!"

When Tommy had gone toward the stairs with a rather dejected amble, Bert closed the door, sat down and considered the advice. Of course

Tommy was a good deal of a nut, but he evidently did use his bean, Bert reflected, and he did seem to know something about the art of football playing. Bert tried to remember whether he did or didn't put his head down when he took the ball. He couldn't decide until he got to his feet, stooped, with the knuckles of one hand on the carpet, listened to an imaginary signal and jumped forward, his hands wide for a mythical ball. When his hands were clasped against his stomach he stopped abruptly in his journey of the room, for he had discovered what he sought. The instant he had clasped the imagined ball to him he had dropped his head!

He went back to his chair and considered again. What he had just done he doubtless always did. In which case Tommy's advice deserved respect. Hitting the line with the head down might be an excellent plan under some conditions, and Bert recalled that he had seen it done time and again, but when you were crossing over or running wide it plainly wasn't the wise proceeding. He guessed that "Head up!" was right. To-day, for instance, he had gone through without difficulty because the hole was awaiting him, a fine wide opening made by four of his team-mates and neatly cleaned out by Fitz Savell, but suppose the hole hadn't been so wide, or hadn't been there at all. In that case he would have smashed up against Fitz or an

enemy forward and there'd have been no gain, because there wasn't any doubt in his mind that he had run blindly, his head lowered and his eyes on the ground. Well, that wouldn't do. He would practice keeping the old bean up and look where he was going. Of course, once free of the line he had probably been in the habit of raising his head and using his eyes, but going through it he had fallen into the way of the plunging backs who, with ball hugged to stomach and body bent sharply over it, shot themselves forward like human battering-rams. Funny, he thought, that no one had noted that and corrected him before. Funny that it should have been first pointed out to him by a chap who didn't play and was popularly considered a joke!

A few minutes later Bert took himself off to a room down the corridor and played two games of chess at which he was badly beaten because he kept thinking about football and Tommy Parish's prediction most of the time. At ten o'clock he was in bed, if not asleep. Even if you couldn't slumber you could obey the rules. Chick was still out when the hour struck. In fact, it was nearly a quarter past when he stole in. Bert gave him a drowsy greeting and got a grunt in reply. Plainly the luck had not gone Chick's way to-night and he was rather out of temper. He made a good deal of unnecessary noise during the process of pre-

paring for bed, with the result that eventually Bert became fully awake.

"You're a noisy brute, Chick," he yawned.

For reply Chick slammed a drawer emphatically. But presently, having put out the light and found his bed, speech came to him. "Well, why don't you ask me if I won?" he demanded.

"I will. Did you?"

"Oh, sure! One game out of three! Talk about luck! Say, that fellow couldn't miss to-night if he tried!"

"Sometimes, I think, he does try," murmured Bert.

"What?" Then, as Bert didn't repeat the observation, he continued disgustedly: "I had him thirty-one to six on the last game and he went out without a break! The balls just rolled everywhere he wanted them to, the lucky stiff! Gee, it would make you sick!"

"Did you bet with him?"

"Naturally. And lost, too."

"How much?"

"Plenty," answered Chick briefly. "But I'll get it back, don't you worry. He's had luck for a week now, but it can't keep up all the time, and I'll sure make a killing soon. He certainly got my goat to-night, though!"

"Tough luck," murmured Bert. "Well, good night."

"Not so blamed good," Chick growled.

CHAPTER IX

SUBS VS. SCRUB

With the beginning of the fourth week of the season, the football situation at Alton Academy had become fairly well straightened out. The squad was down to thirty-four, about as low as it was likely to go, the Second Team had hit its stride and was providing tough opposition four or five times a week, and, with the approach of the first important contest, that with Lorimer Academy next Saturday, the preliminary season was coming to an end in a fairly normal manner. The victory over New Falmouth, while of no great consequence, had shown coach and players and School that the Team possessed latent possibilities, something which the School, at least had begun to doubt. One win out of three starts was a record that was scarcely impressive. However, if Alton was having her difficulties, so, too, was her rival, Kenly Hall. Kenly had won her first game handsomely enough, had lost her second without apparent rime or reason and had been able to do no better on Saturday last than play Oak Grove to a scoreless tie. Since Oak Grove was normally a small-caliber team, Kenly's last performance had

brought encouragement to Alton. Kenly almost always turned out a scoring eleven, and her inability to put anything over on Oak Grove suggested that this fall, for once, she was minus heavy artillery.

On Monday the substitutes held the center of the stage at Alton, since those who had played for any length of time on Saturday were excused after signal work. The Second came across, rearing to go, and engaged an adversary largely composed of second-choice substitutes. Bert, somewhat to his surprise, was allowed to start at right half. Lovell was at quarter for a while, and Tyron and Couch completed the backfield. The scrimmage went slowly, for Mr. Cade was trying out two new plays—new, at least, to the team—and the play was frequently stopped for criticism or instruction. Mr. McFadden's charges were an eager, hard-fighting lot, and in the first ten minutes neither side scored. Field-goals were barred today, except for which both First and Scrub might have had three points. Bert tried his best to act on Tommy Parish's suggestion and keep his head up when he went at the line. Sometimes he did it, but habit was strong and more times he failed. Still, he comported himself fairly well, and when he was relegated to the bench at the end of the first half was able to assure himself that he had done as well as Tyron.

In the second half of the scrimmage Parkhurst started in Bert's position, but he was so weak on defense that he lasted but a few minutes and gave way to Keys. The Second got under way when the ball was fumbled by Riding, who had succeeded Lovell toward the end of the first session, and picked up by a Scrub end. From their own forty-two yards Mr. McFadden's pets smashed along to the First's thirty-one, using a wide sweep that worked with all the efficiency of a steam-roller. Shelfer, playing right end, was of so little use when the play came on his side that Mr. Cade sent him off and looked about for a substitute. Ends, however, were scarce this afternoon, and finally Fitz Savell was tried. Fitz might have claimed immunity, since he had worked rather hard Saturday, but that was far from his thoughts. At end, a position he had played awhile a year back, Fitz fitted excellently, so well that runs around the First Team's right ceased after the next attempt. Too close to the side-line to try a play around the other end, Scrub piled into right guard for no gain and then shot off a neat forward-pass to the left that was caught close to the boundary and advanced for a total gain of seventeen yards. From the First's twelve yards the Second went over for a touchdown in three plays, the final one being an unexpected plunge through a loose center by quarter after a seeming attack on tackle had

fooled the defenders. Couch was slightly hurt in that play and Franklin took his place at full-back. No goal was tried and the First kicked off again and the Scrub left half was downed without a gain by Fitz Savell. One plunge netted two yards and Scrub punted. Keys caught on his forty-three and the First started to hammer the right of the adversary's line and made good going to the opposite forty. There, two smashes were stopped and Keys made an ineffectual attempt to take a long heave from Franklin. Time was taken out for the Scrubs and Coach Cade seized the opportunity to make several changes. Two new linemen were brought in and Keys was sent off to the showers. Coach Cade's demand for another half-back brought Jake, the trainer, to his feet.

"Half-back! Come on, one o' you! All right, What's-your-name!"

But "What's-your-name" didn't get well onto the field before he was turned back. "This man doesn't know these plays, Jake," called the coach. "Who else is there?"

"Not a one, Coach. They've all been worked."

"Well, send some one. Hollins, you come."

So Bert went back, even more surprised than before, and Mr. Cade said: "Take it here, Hollins. Let's see what you can do. We ought to get a score this time."

It was fourth down and Don Riding called for

kick formation with Franklin back. Bert took his place behind right tackle, the signals started and the ball shot back. Franklin, however, had had woefully little practice at taking the pass from center and he made a poor job of it. The cry of *"Ball! Ball!"* arose piercingly as the lines swayed. Bert jumped to the right to head off an opponent who was leaking through, and just at that moment something bounded against his leg. He threw himself outside and let the adversary stumble past him. Then he was running toward the trickling ball, one of several in pursuit. A lucky, half-hearted leap on the part of the pigskin coincided with Bert's swoop, and he straightened up, tucking the ball tightly to him, and started ahead. A falling player sent him staggering to the right, but he recovered and headed in. It looked like a forlorn hope, for the enemy seemed closing in on him. Then, however, Tolman shot past him and went crashing into the nearest of the foe and Bert sped around the falling forms and found his pace.

It wasn't difficult after that. Only one tackler threatened and a straight-arm sent him spinning aside. Bert had picked up the ball near the Scrub's forty-yard line and by the time he was racing over the twenty he was a good two yards in advance of the nearest foe. The Scrub safety man had run in at the warning of the fumble and he

was a poor third when the goal-line was reached. Bert crossed it winded but serene and yielded gracefully to the vindictive tackle of the first pursuer. Mr. Cade, trotting slowly up, said: "Good work, Hollins! Nice dodging. Never mind the try-for-point, fellows! First kicks off!"

Returning somewhat breathlessly up the field, Bert puzzled over the coach's reference to dodging. Bert couldn't remember having dodged once! However, he had won praise from Mr. Cade, and that was certainly good luck! For that matter, the whole proceeding, he reflected, had been a matter of luck! He guessed the touchdown wouldn't raise his stock much.

Yet, on Tuesday, the indications were that it had, and that he had slipped overnight a little farther up the list. He knew this by two tokens. One was the speculative look he surprised on Larry Keys' countenance. The other was the fact that when Larry, who had succeeded Pete Ness at right half, went out in the second session of the scrimmage game Jake's summons was: "Hollins! Go in at left half, boy!"

He played some six minutes that day, remembering better now to keep his head up and look for the opening. Once that proceeding served him well, for on an off-tackle play something went wrong and his own full-back and the opposing end were blocking the hole. Seeing it in time, he sped

on out, closely pursued by the Scrub left end, sidestepped an enemy back and went around for seven yards. Then he stood and listened while Coach Cade made a few critical remarks to Oscar Couch. The First took revenge to-day for yesterday's 6 to 6 tie, piling up three touchdowns on the enemy. One of these was put across while Bert was in, and, although it was Couch who took the ball over, Bert had a fine part in the conquest of those last eight yards and felt as triumphant as any one when, the heap of bodies having been disentangled, the pigskin was found to be well across the mark.

That afternoon Fitz Savell had another try at end, left this time, and Joe Tate looked extremely worried during the experiment. There was no doubt that Savell had the making of a brilliant end-rush, although since that position seemed well supplied with talent there was no apparent reason for sacrificing a good backfield man. Finally Tate was restored to his place and Fitz was later seen at left half once more. Returning to Upton from the gymnasium after practice, Chick voiced uneasiness to Bert. "Wonder what Johnny's idea is in letting Fitz play end. The man's a half-back and a mighty good one, and it would be a queer piece of business to try to make an end of him in the middle of the season. Anyway, we've got four good ends right now."

"Who's the fourth?" asked Bert. "Tate and

Shelfer and Kruger, sure, but who's the other?"

Chick grinned. "Your Uncle Dudley, son. Of course I oughtn't to call myself good, but you'll excuse it."

"Yes," answered Bert, suddenly serious, "you are good, Chick, when you want to be, but it seems to me that you haven't been up to your real form this fall. Not always, I mean."

Chick looked affronted for a moment. Then he laughed. "What's the idea, Bert?" he asked. "Think I'm getting a swelled head, or what?"

"No, but I mean it, Chick. I supposed you knew it, too, or I wouldn't have mentioned it."

"Oh, come," protested Chick, "don't lay it on! I don't say I've always played at top-notch. No fellow can, I guess. But I've kept my end up as well as any of them, haven't I?"

"Perhaps," said Bert. "I may be wrong, of course. Only it has seemed to me that you—well, that you don't try as hard as you did, Chick; don't take as much interest in the game. Perhaps I imagine it. Anyway, you mustn't get sore because I spoke about it."

"Sore! Of course not." But he did sound a trifle irritated. "I thought I'd been playing a pretty good article of football, old scout, and your information is rather jarring. Any one tell you this, or did you just discover it for yourself." Chick's eyes narrowed suspiciously.

"My own idea entirely," replied Bert lightly. "I dare say I'm not a competent judge of how end position should be played. Of course, Chick, I want to see you playing way ahead of every one and so I'm probably over-critical. You know how you're playing better than I do."

"I'd ought to," agreed Chick. Then, when they were in the room, he reverted to the subject. "Funny idea of yours," he mused. "Thinking I'm off my game, I mean." He laughed uneasily. "Hope Johnny doesn't catch it! Fact is, Bert, I haven't been feeling quite as peppy as I ought to so far this fall. Maybe it sort of shows in my playing, eh? I don't believe it, though. I'll bet I've played just as good a game as Joe Tate right along. Don't you think I have?"

"Why, I don't know, Chick. I've said I'm no judge of how end ought to be played. Last year, if you'll remember, you played a better game than Joe, a whole lot better."

"That means you don't think I have, eh? I don't see how you figure it. Take last Saturday, for instance—"

"I won't do it," laughed Bert. "If you say you're playing up to top form that's all there is to it, Charles."

"Top form? Of course I'm not. No fellow reaches top form as early in the season as this. All I do say is that I'm doing just as well as

Joe or any other end! And if Johnny thinks he can scare me by bluffing with Fitz Savell he's wrong!"

"I don't think he had anything like that in mind," said Bert. "Fitz is too good a back to turn into an end. Tell you what, Chick. Cut out the pool for the rest of this week, get to bed on time and then see if you don't feel a lot zippier!"

"Oh, piffle! How is playing a little pool going to affect my football? Don't be an ass, Bert! Anyway, I've got a date with Les Devore for tomorrow night. Maybe I'll quit for a while after that. Got to recoup my losses first, though! That guy has certainly been putting the harpoon into me lately!"

"Did you lose again last night?" asked Bert.

"Well, I didn't exactly win. That fellow's middle name is Lucky, Bert!"

"I guess it must be. Pretty good reason for letting him alone for a while, isn't it? I mean a fellow can buck against a better game, Chick, but a run of luck is something else."

"I guess that's so," agreed Chick thoughtfully. "When we started playing I could beat him two times out of three, but now, with everything breaking his way, I'm doing well if I get one game in four. But, heck, his luck can't last! And when it stops, believe me, Bert, I'm going to lay him out stiff!"

"I'd lay off awhile and give the luck a chance to catch up," said Bert lightly.

"Yes, maybe I'd better," muttered Chick. "After to-morrow."

What happened at Mooney's Wednesday night Bert didn't learn. He was asleep when Chick returned, and since the latter made no mention of the previous evening's events when morning came Bert didn't inquire. Chick seemed in good spirits, whistling while he dressed, but Bert more than half suspected that much of the gayety was assumed. As a matter of fact, Chick was not the sort to arise from bed blithe and singing. It usually took him ten minutes to get his eyes thoroughly open, and during that period he was more the bear with the sore head than the nightingale! So if Chick whistled with intent to deceive he selected the wrong method.

Bert was rather too taken up with his own affairs for the rest of that week to pay very much attention to Chick's, nevertheless he did make note of the fact that neither on Thursday nor Friday evenings did Chick resort to Mooney's. Evidently then Chick had decided to act on Bert's suggestion and allow Mr. Lester Devore's phenomenal luck at pool to become exhausted. Perhaps, too, although he had not accepted Bert's hint with much enthusiasm, Chick thought it wise to take no chances. Certain it was that he got to

bed both nights by ten o'clock, or almost, and that his performances on the gridiron seemed animated by more vim.

Meanwhile Bert discovered that from an unimportant third substitute he had advanced in the period of a few days to the rôle of a player of consequence. Perhaps the degree of consequence wasn't great, but certain it was that he never failed to get into the scrimmage line-up and that Coach Cade, suddenly and rather disconcertingly aware of his existence, gave him a good deal of attention. The attention was sometimes embarrassing, as when on Wednesday afternoon Bert balled a play all up and found himself on his back with two of the enemy kneeling on his diaphragm and the pigskin, tightly clasped, some six yards back of the point it had started from. Bert had heard of coaches who became tempestuous and profane under less provocation, but Mr. Cade was not one of them. Mr. Cade might raise his voice a note or two, but he never lost control of it—or of himself. He didn't even call names; that is, not hard names. He might refer in a gentlemanly manner to a fellow's apparent lack of mentality and address him as a "poor goat," or he might, in cases where a lineman failed to show sufficient aggression, use the allowable term "loafer." But such appellations left no smart. However, it is not to be assumed from this that Mr. Cade was

tongue-tied. Not a bit of it. He had a surprising command of the English language and a remarkable fluency in the use of it. He also displayed a positive genius in the correct choice of words. If one could only remain sufficiently detached, as it were, during one of Johnny's best orations one could without a doubt vastly improve one's rhetoric.

But remaining detached was difficult, and on the occasion alluded to Bert profited not a whit in the matter of increasing his vocabulary or perfecting his speech. He did, however, profit in another way. After Mr. Cade had lucidly and in detail explained your mistake, you didn't make that particular mistake again. Oh, you might turn right around and make another, but not that one! No, sir, never again; or, anyway, not for a long, long time! Bert's ears got very warm and he looked so long and steadily at Johnny's old sweater that he could have drawn a plan of it weeks later and located every hole exactly. Then suddenly the call-down was over and Mr. Cade was saying cheerfully: "All right, First! Let's go now, and stop fooling! Let's have a first down!"

But of course Bert wasn't the only one to incur the coach's displeasure. Even as experienced a hand as Nip Storer got his on one occasion. Bert, standing by while play ceased, felt sympathetic for Nip, but his sympathy was evidently misplaced

since, as soon as Johnny had ended, Nip turned away with a jovial wink. Well, perhaps after you had played two years you got hardened, Bert thought. But as for him, he was still subdued. Chick was on the carpet, also, once, and to Bert it seemed that Mr. Cade's voice was just a trifle colder than before. Chick never took any too kindly to criticism, even from the coach, and he looked slightly contemptuous, slightly mutinous during the proceeding. Bert wished he wouldn't, for Mr. Cade could not fail to notice it, and Bert was fearful that the coach had already set down more than one black mark against Chick.

Thursday there were no misadventures for Bert. He even scored a mild triumph by breaking away from the congested area after a delayed pass and streaking something over thirty yards into the less populated section of the field. He might have kept on and quite lost himself in the vast open spaces around the Second Team's goal line if a pesky long-legged youth named Simpkins hadn't pursued him and eventually attached himself to his legs. Bert never had liked the name of Simpkins, and to-day he liked it less than ever. On Friday the work-out was light and confined principally to the essentials. But the Scrub paid a brief visit and indulged the First Team substitutes in a ten-minute scrimmage. Because of the dismissal of the regulars, Bert found himself starting the trouble at

right half-back, with Tolman beside him and "Ben" Franklin playing full-back. That wasn't much of a contest, for the Second took things into her own hands and marched up the field after the kick-off in a disgustingly irresistible manner, pushing the opposition contemptuously aside and eventually scoring without once losing possession. Bert, among others, was used rather roughly, and on one occasion caused a cessation of hostilities while Jake soused him with water and pumped air into his lungs. Such occasions can be extremely unpleasant while they last, but once over leave no painful effects, and consequently Bert was both surprised and indignant when Jake, in charge because Mr. Cade had accompanied the regulars to the gymnasium, a few moments later called him out. Not being in such awe of the trainer as he was of the coach, Bert voiced his indignation when he reached the side-line.

"What's the idea, Jake?" he remonstrated. "I'm all right! Losing your breath isn't anything to stop playing for!"

Jake viewed him with a cold and fishy eye and spoke briefly. "Shut your trap," said Jake.

Well, after that there was just one thing to do, and Bert did it. He shut his trap.

Scrub threatened a second time, but lost the ball when Parkhurst intercepted a forward-pass and had to be satisfied with her six points. Al-

though the session had been but half-length, casualties were heavy on both sides, with the First Team substitutes receiving the lion's share of the injuries. None of them was serious, but they were uncomfortable enough to engender resentment, and back in the gymnasium, already deserted by the regulars, acrimonious debate ensued up and down the aisles between the lockers. Bert, still feeling rather outraged because of the way in which he had been treated by the Scrub, and indignant because Jake had pulled him out in the middle of the fight, was not in a mood for ragging. So, when Laidlaw, a Scrub end, referred to an occasion when Bert had failed to stop his mad career, Bert resented it. One word led to another, a shoe was thrown, a bench was overturned, an appreciative audience, forgetting its own disputes, closed about and Bert had the extreme satisfaction of knocking Laidlaw to the floor in something under sixty seconds. Laidlaw, undaunted if staggered, would have continued the engagement, but Jake issued wrathfully forth from the rubbing room and made remarks which indicated that the bout didn't have his sanction. So the audience, jeering good-naturedly, dispersed, leaving Bert to fondle a swelling chin and Laidlaw to staunch a flowing nose. Then Bert came on Laidlaw's shoe and politely if coldly returned it to him, and Laidlaw said "Thanks" very gravely and departed to his

shower. And ten minutes later, meeting on the way out, they both grinned and, without a word uttered, parted somewhat better friends than before.

The next morning the Alton Team piled into two busses and hit the trail for Lorimer, while the School cheered the departure and prepared to follow later by train. Bert sat beside Chick and was secretly very elated and somewhat excited. Last season, although he had witnessed every game that Alton had played away from home, he had never made the journey with the Team. If proof was lacking of his new status on the Eleven this happening supplied it. Here he was, with Captain Jonas, large and good-humoredly taciturn, but two seats away, Chick at his right shoulder and Hop Meecham at his left, really and truly, positively and absolutely at last one of the gang! The October morning was gray and chill, with a suggestion of mist at intervals, but Bert didn't know that the sun wasn't shining!

CHAPTER X

CHICK MISSES A FORWARD-PASS

Lorimer presented a hefty team that afternoon, one that outweighed Alton in the line and equaled her in the backfield. And it was a hard-fighting, aggressive and shifty team as well. It didn't display a great variety of plays, but what it showed it knew remarkably well and used to advantage. Lorimer's best ground-gainer was a sweep from kick formation, a play which started slowly enough but gathered momentum rapidly and, when it reached the line, had all the power of a war tank. The interference was well placed and effective, the runner being concealed until well past his end and after that nicely protected by a moving wall of players. All through the first half of the game, whenever Lorimer used that sweep she gained, sometimes many yards—especially when her fullback carried—and sometimes only a few. Toward the end of the second quarter it was less effective, since the secondary defense had learned to concentrate on the runner and pay no heed to the interference as long as the play went toward the side-line, but even up to the last it was good for some slight gain. Since Lorimer sent off passes,

slid off tackle, plunged at the center and kicked from that one formation the visitor was kept busy guessing what was coming. And not infrequently she guessed wrong.

The first score came as a result of a fumble on the part of the home team's quarter on Alton's thirty-six yards. Billy Haines dived through on the pigskin and Jim Galvin, on the first play, romped clean through the Lorimer center for twelve yards. But Jim wasn't able to repeat that stunt, and the ball went slowly to Lorimer's forty-one and a first down, Jim and Nip Storer alternating on the tackles. Then Alton tried a sweep herself and, while the play lacked the finish of the enemy's performance, Pete Ness swung through for seven yards. Pete made four more and first down again on a criss-cross outside tackle. Lorimer braced at her thirty-yard line and two downs went for less than that many yards. Storer went back to kicking position, but he tossed the ball over the line to Joe Tate who, although downed where he had caught, added four yards. Nip Storer tried to put the ball over on a drop-kick, but it went short and rolled over the line. Lorimer kicked high and Ted Ball made a fair catch on the enemy's forty-seven. Ted carried the ball sixteen yards on a wide end run and Jim Galvin hit the line twice and reached the twenty-five yards. With four to go on third down, Ted passed to Nip

and Nip hurled twenty yards to Chick. But Chick failed to quite get into position and the ball grounded. On the next attempt, standing just inside the thirty-five-yard line, Nip put the ball over the cross-bar.

There was no more scoring until just before the end of the half. Then Lorimer, who had twice plugged her way well into Alton territory, the first time to lose the ball on a fumble, found herself on the enemy's twenty-eight on first down. That sweep play netted a scant three yards and placed the pigskin close to a side-line. A four yard smash straight through Captain Lowe followed. Then, with three yards to go, Lorimer prepared for a placement kick. The angle was extreme and Alton warned against a fake. When the ball went back to the quarter that youth arose from the ground and passed across to a running end, and the end scampered off and around the Alton right for half the distance to the goal before Jim Galvin thumped him down. From the ten yards, although the Gray-and-Gold contested every foot of the ground, Lorimer pushed steadily forward, finally thrusting a back through on fourth down for a scant yard and the coveted touchdown. Goal was missed.

When play was resumed after the intermission there was but one change in either line-up, and that change was the substitution of Thomas for Dozier at left tackle on the Alton team. Other

changes came, but they were few and occurred mostly in the final period, by which time it seemed fairly apparent that Alton was destined to be on the short end of a 9 to 6 score. Each team added a field-goal in the third quarter, Alton following Ted Ball's forty-two-yard gallop to Lorimer's twenty; Lorimer after she had pulled down Storer's short punt in the center of the field and desperately worked down to the thirty-one. Lorimer's placement goal from the forty-yard line was one of the few outstanding features of the game. To be sure the ball was directly in front of the goal, but even so forty yards is a long distance for an eighteen-year-old foot to accomplish, and after their first instant of consternation some two hundred Alton supporters applauded generously. Another outstanding feature of the contest was seen some two minutes before play ended and was hailed with far less acclaim by the visitors.

Mr. Cade had begun to relieve the more wearied of his players, and the line-up showed half a dozen new faces. Captain Jonas, however, was still in, and so were the first-string ends, Joe Tate and Chick. Lorimer, too, had introduced fresh material, even more lavishly, and Alton, after receiving a punt on her thirty-nine yards, was trying desperately to tie or win. Fitz Savell twice worked himself loose for short runs and Couch, who had taken Galvin's place, ripped a hole in the

On the next attempt Nip put the ball over the cross-bar

left of the enemy line and romped through for eight yards before he was smothered. Keys failed to gain from the Lorimer forty-three, and Couch faked a forward and then tried the Lorimer left and gathered in almost enough to win a first down. Savell added the necessary yard and then, on the subsequent effort, once more shook off the enemy and reached Lorimer's twenty-two. There the enemy stiffened and, after two unsuccessful attempts by Couch and Keys, and with the sands of time running low, Couch went back to kicking position. He wasn't much of a goal kicker, and, although he was standing inside the thirty yards, those in the Alton section of the stand, even while they shouted hoarsely for victory, had little hope of a score. What they did hope was that, since this was only third down, Couch or some one else would try a forward-pass before risking all on a kick. And, lo, that is just what Couch did try.

Taking the pigskin on a pass from center, he retreated to the right, poising the ball in a generous hand, and, at the last instant of safety hurled it down the field to where Chick lurked unnoticed of the defenders. The throw was well-nigh perfect and covered all of twenty-five yards, and Chick had only to step back a pace to get it, and, having got it, need only leap across a scant ten yards to turn defeat into victory. Alton started her pæan

of triumph while the pigskin still spun lazily in its flight, while Lorimer visioned defeat and sought desperately to reach the unguarded receiver. Chick had his heroic moment then, poised steady and confident in the path of the ball. Doubtless every faculty was alert, every nerve tense. And yet success slipped through his fingers or bounded out of them! The watchers would have sworn that he had the ball safe, that he had turned to run, and yet in the next instant the ball was a free agent, arching maliciously beyond his frantic clutching! It struck the ground, went bobbing across the side-line, and some two hundred mouths, vocal a second before, remained open but empty of sound!

And from somewhere half-way up the stand came a familiar voice in tones audible on the grid-iron. "You've got to hold it, Chick," called Tommy Parish, "or it'll get away from you! Guess nobody told you that!"

Couch made a hopeless try at a goal from the thirty yards, failed miserably and the ball went to Lorimer. There was no more.

Bert, who in spite of bright expectations, had viewed the game through from the substitute's bench, went dejectedly toward the dressing room. Every one was unusually silent. He was careful not to look around lest he encounter Chick's eyes. He wasn't ready to look at Chick yet. He wanted

to show sympathy when he did look, and just now he was too disgusted and downhearted.

Going back to Alton wasn't as bad as Bert had feared it would be. By common consent the game was avoided as a matter for present conversation. Mr. Cade appeared unaffected by the recent defeat and talked unconcernedly with Coles Wistar much of the way home regarding arrangements for the next trip away, a fortnight distant. After Lorimer had been left well behind the spirits of the fellows lightened and one even heard laughter, although it wasn't very hearty yet. Chick's attitude surprised and perplexed Bert. Bert thought that if he had been the one who had fumbled that pass he would be trying to hide under a seat. Chick, however, seemed to have forgotten the incident entirely and was in and out of the conversation about him as cheerfully as any. Perhaps there were others in the bus who considered Chick's manner unusual, but Bert could see no indication of it. Well, he did surprise Captain Jonas once in a long and contemplative regard of Chick, but Jonas's countenance conveyed no emotion. Of course there was no use in crying over spilled milk, reflected Bert, and perhaps a fellow was wise not to let misfortune prey on his mind, but, just the same, he felt that Chick was overdoing the composure.

Even after they were alone in Number 21

Chick's nonchalant air continued. Bert was glad that they were obliged to hurry over to supper, for he was beginning to experience intense exasperation and was certain that if he remained alone with Chick very long he would say something offensive. Not a few of the students were still absent from dining hall when Bert followed Chick over to the training table, and the former was eager to credit the lack of hand-clapping to that fact. None of the players got much applause that evening, although Captain Jonas and Lum Patten, entering late, received fair acclaim. Mr. Cade was not in his place at the head of the table and Andy Dozier said he had taken a taxi and hustled over to the Junction to get an early train home.

"Wish I could," sighed Hop Meecham. "We have baked beans and fish-balls at our house Sunday mornings; and flannel cakes and syrup, too, generally." Hop's countenance assumed a look of intense longing.

"Know what I think?" asked Nip Storer, sinking his voice. "I think Johnny's got a girl! I was in his room two or three days ago and there's a whacking big picture of a dame on his mantel that wasn't there last year. I'll bet he's going to get married, fellows!"

The theory aroused interest at that end of the long table. "Sure as shooting!" said Ted Ball. "That's why he's going to quit, eh?"

"If he is," doubted Billy Haines. "Me, I think that's just bunk."

"Well, I don't. You hear it everywhere. Say, what's the girl look like, Nip?"

"Some queen, kid! Sort of proud-looking, you know, like one of those movie dames."

"Don't know that I'd be very keen about hitching up with Johnny if I was a girl," said Dozier. "Bet you he will make her toe the mark."

"Take the bet," scoffed Ted. "She'll gentle him in a week! Say, I had a cousin who was a major in the World War and got four decorations and citations and things and was a holy terror over there. Killed 'em single-handed or lugged 'em in over his shoulder, a couple at a time. Some boy he was! Well, what happened to him four years ago? Why, he met a girl who just reached up to the place where he parked his medals and married her. Some one went by their place about two months after they got settled and blamed if the Major wasn't out in the back-yard beating a carpet!"

" 'The bigger they are the harder they fall,' " chuckled Nip. "Say, Johnny will be a regular find when it comes to house cleaning. With that bristle head of his his wife can clean every rug in the house. And when it comes to getting the soot out of the stovepipes!"

"Aw, shut up," growled Billy Haines. "He

isn't going to get married and he isn't going to quit. Bet you that picture's his sister."

"Oh, sure," jeered Nip, "a fellow always puts his sister's photo in a ten-dollar frame and sticks it on the mantel, doesn't he? Yes, he does—like fun! Sis gets chucked in the bottom drawer somewhere!"

"You tell 'em, you Sunday Sheik," said Meecham. "Your knowledge of such matters, Nip, makes me fairly shudder!"

Nip threatened him with a salt-cellar, and, encountering the interested regard of Mr. Metcalfe, from a near-by table, sprinkled his slice of toast and apple-butter lavishly before setting the cellar down.

Bert lost track of Chick after supper. He thought he knew where he was to be found, but he didn't seek him. Instead, he dropped into Bus Lovell's room and later accompanied Bus and four other youths to a moving picture theater on the far side of town. The picture was pretty bad, but they managed to have plenty of fun.

On Sunday a verse of alleged poetry was going the rounds. Tommy Parish was credited with the authorship, but he refused to acknowledge it. I grieve to say that Bert saw it first in church when, during the sermon, Toby Shelfer slipped him a piece of paper on which was scrawled: "Seen this? Read it and pass it on.

"To a football game I went one day
Intent on having fun.
They brought me to with amon-i-a
The day that Alton won!"

The papers that morning announced that at Lakeville Kenly Hall had yesterday defeated Mount Millard, 25 to 7. Details were few, but they weren't needed at Alton to persuade the fellows that this looked like another big year—for Kenly!

CHAPTER XI

A SHAKE-UP

Coach Cade was back on Monday for dinner, and to one or two especially observant members of the squad he looked more grim and determined than usual. Instead of sending the squad out to the field at three-thirty that afternoon he talked to them in the gymnasium for some twenty minutes. First he took up Saturday's game and went through it exhaustively, pointing out mistakes and short-comings. He started with center and worked through guards, tackles, ends and backs, and it was surprising how many faults he managed to mention. Finally he said: "Now, fellows, I'm going to talk plain. We are all in this together. If I fail in my duties it affects you, and if you fail it comes back on me. You want to win your games and I want you to, and if you're to do it you and I have got to team up and pull side by side from now on. There's no getting around the fact that so far we've made a poor showing. You will have to look back over the Alton football records for many years before you'll find a season as disappointing as this has been so far. We've played

four games and won just one. Not only that but, against pretty weak teams, we've managed to score only 40 points to the opponents' 31. You don't need to have me tell you that there's something wrong somewhere. I wish I could tell you what it is, but I can't. I'm willing to assume half the responsibility, though, for I have a hunch that I know one way in which I've failed this fall. I'll take that up in a minute. What I'm getting at now is that it's up to all of us to face the situation and determine to get the best of it. It's a time for drastic measures, and I want you to realize it. We can't defeat Kenly Hall if we keep on the way we're going. I'm certain of that, and those of you who have played here in other seasons know it too. All right, then. We've got to stop taking things for granted and prove them. That's what we've been doing, fellows, taking things for granted. Both of us. That's the mistake I spoke of a minute ago. You are taking it for granted that you're going to be able to play winning football when you get up against Kenly. Probably you know yourselves capable of it. I think you are capable of it. I'm taking it for granted, too. That is, I have been. Beginning to-day, though, I'm not."

He paused and looked over the half circle of puzzled faces before he continued. "Beginning to-day, fellows, no one is going to hold a position

on this team because he filled it last season, or because he thinks himself entitled to it through previous service, or because he shows promise. Nor for any other reason save just one, which is that he proves conclusively to my satisfaction that he is the best man for the job. This goes from top to bottom, from Captain Lowe to the greenest man on the squad. Captain Lowe may be the best man for the right guard position; probably he is; but he's got to show us, you and me both. So on right through the line-up. You may be all you think you are, all you ought to be, all I've been accepting you as, but, by golly, you've got to prove it. No position is sacred any longer, fellows. If Smith wants Jones' job all he's got to do is go and get it. It's his if he can play a better brand of football than Jones. Theoretically this has always been the rule here, this year as well as other years, just as it is the general rule at other schools and colleges. Actually, however, it hasn't been working very thoroughly, and that's my fault. Some of you have—well, hypnotized is the best word I can think of—have hypnotized me into accepting you at your own valuation, into thinking as you do that you own your positions. Well, yesterday I woke up. I saw that I'd been taking far too much for granted. Here's where I stop being an easy mark, fellows. And here's where all mortgages are canceled. How's that hit you?"

Some of the countenances before him looked rather dazed, others showed grins, but no one replied for an instant. Then Captain Lowe said calmly: "Suits me, Coach!" And other murmured agreements followed.

"Good! We've got material here plenty good enough to build a winning team out of, fellows. Let's do it. Let's start to-day and build from the bottom up. There's time enough. The material's seasoned, only the arrangement will be new. Wistar, got a sheet of paper handy? All right. Put down the names of the fellows, all of them, and classify them as usual: linemen, ends, backs; and let me have the list when we go out. There's one more thing I want to speak of. There's been far too much fumbling going on. A certain amount of it's to be expected at this season, but we've been overdoing it. Saturday's game was lost through a fumble, and there were two others which, while recovered fortunately enough, shouldn't have occurred. I want to get rid of that stuff, and if necessary I'll go back to a half-hour of passing every afternoon. But I think it's possible to cure weak fingers in another way. You'll remember how in the poem of The Ancient Mariner the man who shot the albatross had it tied around his neck as punishment. Well, I propose to adopt a somewhat similar plan. After this too many fumbles will result in the offender carrying a football

around with him wherever he goes: classes, meals, off the campus, everywhere; and at night it will sit beside him on a chair at the head of his bed. This isn't an original idea; it's been tried before; but I think it ought to work. Will you fellows agree to it and make it effective?"

Agreement was hearty. The idea amused them and, since the discourse had hitherto been too serious to allow of levity, they laughed uproariously. Mr. Cade smiled, too, but the smile was rather grim.

"That's all, fellows," he said. "Let's go out and make up for lost time."

That afternoon practice went off as usual on a Monday, with the accent on formation drill and the players in Saturday's game being excused thereafter. The Second Team engaged a team of substitutes and won handily in two ten-minute periods. Bert played right half in the first period and gave way to Keys in the second. Neither of them performed any deeds calculated to raise their stock, yet Bert found encouragement in the fact that Coach Cade had selected him to start the scrimmage. That made it look as if in the coach's estimation he and Keys were about on a par.

A rather garbled and exaggerated version of Mr. Cade's remarks circulated about school that evening, and the reactions were varied. Many dubbed the scheme as suicidal, declaring it too late

in the season to start a reorganization of the team. Others favored the plan, sometimes remarking vindictively that it would serve some of those swelled-heads about right if they lost their positions. Then still others met the news with a pessimistic shrug. It didn't much matter, they thought, what Coach Cade did. In any event the team was too rotten to be saved and another defeat at the hands of Kenly Hall was inevitable.

Tommy Parish got the tidings from his roommate, Billy Pillsbury. Pill was much excited and predicted disaster. Tommy said: "Soak your head, Pill. Johnny's got the right idea at last. I was wondering how long it would take him to tumble to himself."

Pill stared incredulously. "Aw, get out, Tommy! You never thought of it! I suppose you'll be saying next thing that you suggested it to Johnny!"

Tommy shrugged. "No, I didn't suggest it to him, but I might have. All fall fellows like Andy Dozier and Hop Meecham and others I could name have been sitting pretty and doing just enough to get by. They sure had Johnny buffaloed! They couldn't have done it another season, but this year Johnny has too much on his mind."

"How do you mean?" asked Pill, impressed in spite of his determination not to be. "What's he got on his mind?"

Tommy winked soberly. "A girl," he answered.

"Oh, piffle! That's just a yarn. Some fellow saw a photograph on Johnny's mantel and started that stuff."

"All right, Mister Wisenheimer, you know it all. But you just wait and see. Pshaw, I know the signs! I've got brothers and sisters, Pill, and I know how they act when they've got the bug. It's fierce!"

"Well, even if that's so," said Pill, "Johnny's making a bull. You can't make over a football team right in the middle of the season. Gosh, what do you suppose will happen if he gets to monkeying with some of the guys? They'll get mad and quit on him cold!"

"Don't you be alarmed," answered Tommy calmly. "There won't be as many changes as you might think, son. Let some of those fellows get it into their beans that they're going to lose their positions if they don't brace up and they'll brace, take it from me! Bet you there won't be four changes in the whole line-up between now and the big game! What will happen, Pill, is that the whole bunch of loafers will get onto themselves and do an honest day's work now and then! You watch, young Pill."

The immediate result was a rather different line-up on Tuesday when scrimmage began. Kruger

had Tate's place at left end, Nat Wick was at left guard in lieu of Meecham, Toby Shelfer played right end, and Fitz Savell had Storer's job at halfback. As the game progressed other changes were made. Howard went in for Haines at right tackle, a practically unknown youth named Walsh sent Jim Galvin out and Bert relieved Pete Ness at right half. Nor was Mr. Cade through even then, for, when the scrimmage was almost over, he grabbed a tackle from the Scrubs and put him in Andy Dozier's place. Results were not easy to judge, but at least the First showed more downright fight than it had exhibited for some time. It pushed the Scrub down the field for sixty yards in the last period and finally hurled Walsh through for a score. Since the Scrub had met with a stronger resistance than usual that touchdown represented the day's scoring.

On Wednesday Mr. Cade used two teams against the Second, one for each ten-minute period, and each grabbed off a touchdown. Bert played right through on the second line-up—it was difficult to say whether it was Mr. Cade's second choice or his first, regulars and substitutes were so mixed together—and got a nice thirty-yard romp on one occasion that might have resulted in a score if Don Riding, playing quarter, had not fumbled. Back in the locker room that afternoon the expressions of doubt and even consternation on some of the

faces might have amused a disinterested bystander. Jake, the trainer, came nearest to that character, and Jake smiled more than once while he administered to contusions and strains and listened to the talk.

It became noised about on Thursday that Mr. Cade would pick the team to play Oak Grove according to the performances that afternoon, and not even Tommy Parish could—or did—complain of indifference or lassitude on the part of the candidates. Some of the regulars—or those who had been regulars—moved around with the nervous, anxious alacrity of new hands, trying to impress the coach with their energy and ambition against the time when the line-up for the scrimmage with the Scrub should be announced. Even Captain Jonas looked almost perturbed at moments. He had heartily agreed to Mr. Cade's plan, but he sometimes wished he hadn't. Jonas wasn't used to trying to impress folks as being eager and full of pep! It came hard!

Mr. Cade drove the First hard that afternoon, and almost every fellow on the squad saw service before the end. Second was given the ball on the First's thirty-yard line a number of times and told to rush it, field-goals being barred. Once the Scrub scored on a short pass over the line, but the other times she was forced to yield the ball short of the goal. She was on her mettle to-day and the

First Team linemen underwent some hard knocks. For that matter, so did the backs, for there was a weak place on the left of the line that continued all during the scrimmage, and more than once it was the secondary defense that stopped the runner. Bert played for some six or eight minutes in the last period, and, although First was showing what she could do on attack during most of that time, he was used pretty roughly and finally emerged with a fine large welt under one eye. As an exhibition of playing Thursday's performance was distinctly encouraging, but as an indication of what Saturday's line-up was to be it was a failure. Even on Friday the coach used three or four men for every position, and surprised his charges by staging a fifteen-minute scrimmage against the Scrub. Certainly Oak Grove was not a fearsome opponent, but such hard work the day before a game was well-nigh unprecedented. It was on Friday that Bert flashed for an instant when, pulling down a twelve-yard forward-pass over the right of the line, he squirmed and fought onward for sixteen more before superior weight and numbers brought him down. In that run he showed a really remarkable ability for eluding tacklers and throwing off tackles, for he went through half a dozen of the enemy and squirmed away from others like a greased pig. And yet, some two minutes later, when the same play was repeated he

failed badly at getting into position for the catch and the ball was plucked out of the air by the Scrub full-back. Fortune, it seemed, was a fickle goddess!

Chick was difficult to live with during the closing days of that week, for he had been spending much of his time on the bench and resented it bitterly. Bert's reminder that a lot of the others were faring the same way and that, once Mr. Cade got through experimenting, they'd probably all be back in place again failed of the soothing effect it was designed to produce. Chick didn't think well of experiments, and said so in unmistakable language. "What's it getting him?" he demanded that Friday evening. "He's tried Shelfer and Nast and Savell, and not one of them has played the position as well as I do. Oh, maybe Savell, yes, but he's not such a wonder on defense. He got boxed finely a couple of times to-day. Johnny will put me back there finally, and he knows it plaguy well, so what's the use of letting me miss practice? I haven't been in once when that Number 14 play was tried. They'll use it to-morrow and then wonder what's wrong if I don't get the right man!"

"I don't believe he's in earnest about Fitz Savell," said Bert. "He wouldn't spoil a corking good back."

"Of course not! Then what's the good of mak-

ing believe? He's just losing time. The whole truth of the matter is that Johnny's up in the air and doesn't know what to do about it. So he's just fiddling around in the hope that he will light on something. If he would teach us about four good scoring plays and quit monkeying with his delayed passes and fake kicks we'd deliver the goods, I'll bet!"

"That Number 14 looks pretty good, though, Chick. It fooled the Scrub all right yesterday and to-day."

"The Scrub? Sure! But just let him try it against a wide-awake team like Mt. Millard a week from now. Why, they'll eat it up, Bert! There's nothing new about it. It's old stuff to them, I'll bet."

"No, it isn't new," said Bert, "but I heard Ted say that it has new features."

"Tackle coming around and going through with the two halfs may be new, but I don't believe it makes the play any better. Besides, what's the idea of working it from a shift? You can do the same thing from regular formation. Shucks, I've been seeing that old trick ever since I was knee-high!"

"I guess what you can call new plays aren't to be had any more, Chick." Bert was glad enough to argue this matter out if only to keep Chick away from his grievance. "Most everything's

been done already, and about all a coach can hope to do is dress an old play up in new togs so it'll look like a stranger. I don't believe Johnny will let us use that Number 14 to-morrow, anyway. I think he's going to save it for Kenly."

"He's pretty sure to try it on Mt. Millard, because Mt. Millard will take a lot of licking, old scout. And I'll bet Mt. Millard will love it to death, too! Anyway, if he does use it to-morrow it won't be my fault if I flub it. He hasn't worked me in it once."

"Oh, you can't miss, Chick. Defending left half's your meat. All you do is block him off."

"Just the same, I should have been in on it at least once," responded Chick, evidently determined to be displeased. "No fellow can learn a play just by watching it from the bench or tagging along with the gallery!"

But, as it turned out, Chick needn't have worried himself, for the next afternoon at two-forty-five Mr. Cade gave out the line-up for the Oak Grove game and Chick wasn't mentioned.

CHAPTER XII

THE EDITOR CALLS

That line-up held some real surprises, and since it was the line-up that, with but one change, continued to the end of the season it may be well to set it down here. Left End, Kruger; Left Tackle, Thomas; Left Guard, Wick; Center, Patten; Right Guard, Lowe; Right Tackle, Haines; Right End, Savell; Quarter-Back, Ball; Left Half-Back, Storer; Right Half-Back, Walsh; Full-Back, Galvin.

The re-forming of the whole left side of the line was a distinct shock, although lessened by the suspicion that the dumping of Tate and Dozier and Meecham was only temporary. At any rate the School entertained that suspicion, but the players themselves were less optimistic. The placing of Savell at right end was doubtless another experiment, and the presence of an almost unknown like Larry Walsh in the backfield was merely a wild flight of fancy on the part of the coach. So at least those in the stand explained the appearance of the new claimants. On the bench, away from the hearing of the coach, speculation was rife and animated. The deposed ones generally accepted

their fate philosophically and smiled. One of them, though, was neither philosophical nor smiling. Chick's countenance portrayed a queer mingling of puzzlement and resentment. Returning from warming up with the second squad, Bert, although the act savored of treachery, chose a seat far removed from his chum. He felt very sorry for Chick, but he knew that he had nothing in the way of condolences that the other would listen to.

If Coach Cade was aware of the mild sensation he had created there was nothing to indicate the fact. He gave his final instructions in his usual calm and cheerful manner and retired to an end of the bench with Manager Wistar to observe results. The results were not very startling. If he or any one else had expected to witness a sudden and radical change for the better in the playing of the Alton team he was doomed to disappointment. But probably he was experienced enough to expect nothing of the sort. The first half of the contest possibly vindicated his judgment, but it resulted in only one score by the Gray-and-Gold, a neat placement kick by Nip Storer. Oak Grove put up only a fair grade of football, presenting a rather decent defense but showing little in the way of attack.

The left of the Alton line did well enough, although it was evident that there was a lack of experience there. Of the three new occupants of

the positions Nat Wick created the best impression. He was steady and shifty and helped his center well on defense and was a big improvement over Hop Meecham on attack. Fitz Savell performed brilliantly, although the opposition was not such as to make his work exceptional. Larry Walsh failed to distinguish himself at any time during the game, although he proved to be a hard-working, plugging back who could be depended on to make a short gain whenever he was used. Walsh had played on the Second last season without getting into the lime-light. He was a husky youth, with plenty of weight and a shock of yellowish hair which, when his head guard fell off, shone like an oriflamme. In the last period it was Walsh who wore down the defense and allowed Storer to rip through for Alton's third score and second touchdown.

On the whole that was a dull contest, with Oak Grove never threatening and Alton using some eight or nine straight plays and relying on superior kicking to keep her out of tight places. Only two forward-passes were tried by Alton, and both grounded. On her part, Oak Grove kept away from the aerial game as far as her opponent until, in the last period, desperation drove her to it. But she had nothing in that line that deserved notice. Usually her receiver failed to reach position and the pass was incompleted, but once Savell took

the ball out of the air and got off a nice run of twenty yards or so. Coach Cade made several changes during the course of the contest and ran in a handful of substitutes towards the end, and altogether twenty-one players took part in administering a 17 to 0 defeat to the visitor.

The School chose to regard the event as a notable victory, and, although the pleas of the cheer leaders during the game had elicited but little cheering, there was a most flattering salvo of applause to greet the players when they entered Lawrence that evening. Perhaps the School was glad of an opportunity to applaud and so made the most of it. Coach Cade, breaking his usual custom of returning to his home over Sunday, received a lot of clapping and fervid "A-a-ays!" when he appeared for supper, and must have been slightly surprised thereby since it had been no secret to him that the student body was somewhat critical of his conduct of the team. Chick's appetite was small that evening, and he had little to say. He appeared to have settled on cynical dignity as the proper attitude, and maintained it throughout the meal. Afterwards he disappeared with startling abruptness, and Bert's efforts to discover him in any one of several rooms failed. Bert's last port of call was Number 5 Lykes, and there he remained until late, in company with Ted Ball and Coles

Wistar and Nip Storer and Captain Jonas Lowe, while the recent events were discussed fully and with a frankness that would have interested Coach Cade. The consensus of opinion was that Johnny had done a brave if dastardly deed and that, pending results, judgment should be reserved. And Captain Jonas said stolidly: " 'S long's we beat Kenly 's all right with me!"

"You," quoth Coles, "might be expected to view the—er—affair philosophically, Jonas. You're not out of a job."

Jonas grinned, but made no reply. Perhaps an answer was brewing in his mind, but just then Hop Meecham and Pete Ness stopped in with the cheering news that Kenly Hall had been beaten by Trinity Freshmen that afternoon, 14 to 6. "Just came over the radio in Borden," said Hop. "And Yale beat the Army, and Notre Dame beat— Who was it, Pete?"

"Canal Zone Polytechnic Institute, wasn't it?"

"Oh, shut up! Anyhow—"

"Sure about Kenly, though?" asked Nip Storer. "I don't know how good Trinity Freshmen are, but I hope they're rotten!"

"They sang off a lot of other scores, and I told Pete to remember them, but I'll bet he hasn't," said Hop. "What were they, Dumb-bell?"

Pete shrugged. "All I remember is Mount

Millard and Banning, Mt. Millard won. I forget the score: 26 to something, I think; maybe it was 26 to 14."

"Who cares?" asked Ted Ball. "The question interesting me is what'll the score be next Saturday?"

"Oh, we'll win," said Nip. "We can't have any more rotten luck!"

"I'd like to believe it," answered Coles.

"Say," asked Hop, "heard about the new club just started? Called the Garbage Pail. Very exclusive. Only five members so far. I'm president and Pete's secretary, or something. I'd be glad to propose you guys only you're not rotten enough—yet!"

"Johnny," said Pete, "has just been elected to Ornery Membership. It wouldn't be a bad idea for some of you chaps to fill out your applications soon. You might be eligible in a day or two."

"And that's no Mother Goose tale!" said Nip. "Every time Johnny looks my way I start to pull my head guard off and write out my resignation. Keep a place in the Pail for me, Hop!"

"Say, what about it, Cap?" asked Pete. "Are we down-and-out, or is Johnny just having a joke with us?"

"Guess he means it," answered Jonas soberly. "You fellows want to hump yourselves."

"You watch me," said Hop. "If Nat Wick gets

my job for keeps that lad's got to go some! Mind you, I'm not blaming Johnny, either. I'm free to confess that our side of the line's been pretty punk, and Andy Dozier and I had it coming to us. Joe, too, I guess. As for Pete, every one knows how rotten he's been!"

"Is that so?" growled Pete.

"I thought I was playing a pretty nice game," went on Hop reflectively, "but I guess I wasn't. Anyhow, something was sure loose on that side and maybe it was me. I'd hate like the deuce to think I was dumped for good, though."

"Pshaw," said Coles, "Johnny means to have you back there, Hop. As Jonas says, get out and hump, son!"

"Oh, I'm going to hump," Hop assured him. "You won't know me from a dromedary by Monday!"

Bert got back to Number 21 well before ten o'clock and found an empty room. What time Chick returned Bert never knew, but it was certainly well after ten.

Sunday's paper corroborated the radio announcement of Kenly's defeat, but since one of the opponent's touchdowns had been due to an intercepted forward-pass in midfield and the other scored in the last minute or two of the game, when the Kenly Hall team had contained numerous substitutes, there was less encouragement to be de-

rived from it. According to the correspondent's account of the affair Kenly had played better football; although, as Chick pointed out when Bert drew his attention to the statement, the correspondent was naturally prejudiced.

Living with Chick that Sunday was a good deal like being holed up with a disgruntled bear, Bert secretly thought. And since it rained hard from early dawn to darkness, there wasn't much chance of getting out of the hole for long. Church attendance was canceled in the forenoon, at which time the rain was descending in torrents and the streets were rivers, and even at one o'clock nothing save hunger would have taken Bert to Lawrence Hall. Chick was a pessimist to-day. Not an ordinary pessimist, either, but something exceptional, a sort of hyper-super-pessimist. Nothing was right for Chick. The weather was a personal affront, the newspaper was dull, his fountain pen was execrable, letter writing was a task invented by the devil and having to go out for dinner in the rain was a crime. Chick was pretty certain that he would catch cold and die within a few days, or so Bert gathered. Chick didn't flare up over any of the sorry tricks Fate was playing on him. He was just morose and hopeless, abjectly, profoundly hopeless. He didn't seem to want to talk on any subject that Bert could think of. And when he wasn't talking he managed to give Bert the idea

that as a companion for a rainy day, he, Bert, was a total loss!

Bert was heartily glad when Homer Johnson came in after dinner and made a third. Homer was Captain of the Baseball Team, and just at first he made it appear that it was in that capacity he had called, for he tried to get Chick to agree to join the early season squad. As a member of last season's team, Chick was exempt from the first two weeks of indoor practice, but Homer spoke movingly of needing coaching assistance and Chick, perhaps because he didn't expect to be alive in February, grudgingly consented. Homer was also Editor-in-Chief of the Doubleay, and the real motive for his visit became apparent when, the baseball business being concluded, he introduced the subject of football. Did Chick consider that Mr. Cade had made a success of his work this season? Bert expected animation from Chick at last, but he was disappointed. Even the opportunity to discuss Johnny failed to arouse him from the depths of his despair. He said he guessed Johnny was doing as well as any one could.

"There's a good deal of talk about the changes he made for yesterday's game, Chick," said Homer. "A lot of the fellows think he has sort of lost his grip this fall. It does look as if he was a bit panicky, doesn't it? I mean changing the team this way in the middle of the season."

"Maybe," said Chick gloomily. "Better ask him, hadn't you?"

Homer laughed lightly. "That's not a bad idea. But I was curious to know how the players themselves felt about it, you see. We try, in the Doubleay, to reflect School opinion, Chick, and of course you fellows on the team have a far better notion of how things are going than the rest of us. We don't mean to quote any one's opinions personally, you understand. What we're after is to find out how the players themselves size up the present situation, what their reaction is to this sudden and apparently high-handed displacing of so many veteran members of the Team. There's no question but what the coach is doing what he considers best, Chick, but *is* it best? Doesn't a thing like this play hob with the Team's *esprit de corps?* Isn't it disorganizing? You see what I mean?"

Chick viewed him balefully. "Sure, I see what you mean. You want me to grouch and throw Johnny down. Nothing doing, Homer. You go see Johnny himself and ask him if he's cuckoo. I don't know."

"Well, you're not very helpful," laughed Homer. "What do you say, Hollins?"

"I say it's poor policy for the Flubdub to criticize the coach in the middle of the season," answered Bert. "Mr. Cade's done mighty well since

he's been here, hasn't he? What's the idea in jumping to the conclusion that he's going to make a mess of it this year?"

"No one suggests that he's making a mess of it," Homer protested. "And as for criticism, why, if it's helpful Coach Cade is the last one to resent it. A football coach is only human, Hollins, and he's liable to make mistakes of judgment. In that case he ought to be glad to find it out in time to make—er—correction. Gosh, the Doubleay isn't trying to ride John Cade, Hollins. All we're trying to do is deal truthfully with affairs of the School and—and present, when we can, wise counsel. Now—"

"Applesauce," moaned Chick.

"Oh, all right!" Homer arose and prepared for departure. "I don't see why you're so blamed grouchy, Chick. If you had to get out this confounded paper each week you'd be a bit more—more sympathetic. But if you don't want to talk, don't."

"Don't," muttered Chick.

Homer retreated in good form, and after the door had closed Chick said: "Got a lot, didn't he?"

"I'm glad you didn't bite," answered Bert. "After all, whether Johnny is right or wrong, trying to make a sensation of it in the Flubdub isn't going to help. And naturally a chap who was dropped from the line-up Saturday isn't going to talk about it!"

"Huh! I could have given him an earful if I'd wanted to," muttered Chick. "I've got an opinion, all right!"

"Well, I'm glad you didn't spill it to Johnson."

"Yeah, he gives me a pain," said Chick sadly.

CHAPTER XIII

AROUND THE END

November arrived that week with several days of unseasonably warm weather, and football practice, which had started off on Monday with much zest, slowed up. More than one of the deposed players lost his ambition to regain his place as the mercury mounted under the influence of a sun that shone with the ardor of August; or, if his ambition remained, his efforts waned perceptibly. Jake decreed a let-up in the drive and Coach Cade was forced to obey. That was a worrisome week for the coach. There were several injuries, the players showed a disposition to lag, the recent changes in the make-up of the team were not yielding the hoped-for results, criticism was rampant and a graduate who had agreed to appear that Wednesday and coach the linemen wrote that he wouldn't be able to arrive before the week following. While all the injuries were minor affairs save one, they nevertheless kept the fellows out of practice for periods varying from one day to four, and at a time when the services of every member of the squad were greatly needed. With the Mt. Millard game looming up on Saturday, Coach Cade found

himself far from prepared. The Team was showing a fairly good brand of defensive playing, but anything like a consistent attack was still lacking. The punters, at least two of whom had promised extremely well at the beginning of the season, had not made the expected progress, and in that feature Alton was deficient. Mt. Millard invariably gave the Gray-and-Gold a stern battle, and, because she had won almost as often as she had lost, had come to be regarded as a foe only second in importance to Kenly Hall. Alton always made earnest preparation for Mt. Millard and tried mightily to put over a victory. This fall the game was to be played on the adversary's own grounds, at Warren, a circumstance not favoring Alton.

There was a good stiff work-out on Tuesday, with the First battering the Scrub in an endeavor to build up an attack and not succeeding especially well. Mr. Cade used two sets of backs and saw them both subdued by the Second. On Wednesday and Thursday hard work was made impossible by the heat and the coach counted the days as practically lost. Friday was more moderate and, despite Jake's disapproval, he put the squad through a full session. The Scrub got trounced roundly that afternoon, the First putting over three touchdowns and kicking goals after two of them. The First played without the services of Patten, at center, and Ball, at quarter. Patten was nursing a

wrenched knee sustained on Wednesday, and Ted was favoring an ankle which was causing Jake much perplexity and some worry. First scored twice on plunges at the line varied by sweeps and once on a short pass, Couch to Kruger. The Second never got nearer the opponent's goal than the twenty-four yards, from where, after two forward-passes had failed, she attempted a drop-kick only to have it blocked. Both teams were pretty well played-out by the end and Jake shook his head dismally over them.

Bert saw his share of work that week, alternating with Keys in the second set of backs. He did well on several occasions, not so well on others. Once through the line or around an end, Bert could be counted on to make good gains, but lack of weight handicapped him frequently when the play called for beef and brawn. On such occasions Larry Keys was the better of the two. On defense, however, Bert was showing himself more than Larry's equal, for he seemed to have an uncanny ability to tell where the play was coming through and a speed not possessed by his rival. He was confident that he had improved in his playing a good deal in the course of the season, but he was equally aware of his shortcomings as a line plunger and inclined to believe, with Chick, that he would have to wait until next year to really make good.

Chick was maintaining his attitude of wounded

dignity, an attitude which didn't sit well on him and which his team-mates resented and ridiculed. Many of them got sorely out of patience with Chick about this time and perhaps wondered how they had ever come to consider him for the captaincy. The things which had made for popularity were conspicuously absent, and he had become what Ted Ball called "snorty." Nevertheless Chick managed to play some good football that week and possibly caused Mr. Cade to wonder whether he had made a mistake in shifting him out of the first line-up. Off the field he seemed to Bert about the same old Chick, save that he was a trifle moody and had periods of testiness during which he was hard to get along with. He pretended that he didn't care much whether he or Savell ended the season in possession of his old position and managed to convey the idea that he considered it below his dignity to compete for it. Just the same he did compete, and Fitz was seldom more than a leap ahead in the race during that week. He still played pool three and sometimes four evenings out of seven, but he generally managed to get to bed if not promptly by ten, at worst a few minutes after. Bert gathered that luck still favored Mr. Devore, although Chick had become close-mouthed on the subject of his favorite pastime.

All Alton journeyed to Warren on Saturday.

The town was a small, sleepy place, with elm-shaded streets and old white houses at wide intervals, and when the Gray-and-Gold cohorts descended upon it, as they did every other fall, it seemed to fairly shiver with outrage. Mt. Millard School lay on the outskirts of the village, at the end of a wide and shadowed street from which this afternoon clouds of dust arose under the tread of the invaders. There was no lofty eminence in sight to account for the school's name, but the buildings did occupy a perceptible rise in the landscape, beyond which, on a level plateau of still verdant sod, stretched the playing field. As the day, while not nearly so hot as the middle of the week, was decidedly warm, the visitors were grateful for the shade supplied by a row of giant elms that traversed one edge of the field. Scorning the half of a small grandstand reserved for them, they made themselves comfortable on the grass, while those of affluence and foresight produced provender purchased on the way and did their best toward supplying the school caretakers with a real day's work for Monday.

Alton took the field at three with the same line-up used last week with the exception of Lovell for Ball at quarter-back. Ted's ankle was still "backward in coming forward" and, although Jake had consented to his playing if necessity required, he had resigned himself to an afternoon of idleness.

Mt. Millard had requested shortened periods in deference to the warmth and thirteen- and twelve-minute quarters had been decided on. Alton won the toss and chose to receive the kick-off and the contest started.

Nip Storer caught near his fifteen yards and found the enemy presenting a tough resistance to his advance and was satisfied with reaching the twenty-two. A wide sweep, with Jim Galvin carrying the ball from kicking position netted all but one yard of the required ten, and after Nip had failed to get the distance on a plunge at guard he punted to Mt. Millard's thirty-three. Dutch Kruger was on hand when the local quarter-back got the ball and stopped the latter for a two-yard gain. Mt. Millard tried out Thomas and made two and swung around Savell's end for three more. A heave over the center grounded and the ball sailed back to Alton's twenty where Lovell caught, fumbled and recovered on the twenty-seven. The Gray-and-Gold used the sweep play and crossed the middle of the field in six downs. There, however, Lovell again fumbled and Mt. Millard got the pigskin. A thrust at Meecham yielded a couple of yards and the quarter skimmed Savell for three more. On third down a double pass, with the ball finally going off toward the side line to a waiting end, almost succeeded, but Kruger leaped into the air at the last possible instant and knocked the oval

down. Mt. Millard faked a punt and made it first down with a six yard run by full-back. Two slams at the left of the line netted five yards and a criss-cross sent a back grinding off Haines for three more. Again a punt was faked and Mt. Millard threw straight over center and well down the field for a sixteen-yard advance that put the ball on Alton's twenty-four. There Alton braced and on two plunges the opponent lost three yards. A fake forward-pass became a wide sprint by left half, but he was tumbled by Thomas and it was fourth down with nine to go and the pigskin close to a side-line. It was then that the home team won the visitor's vast respect.

The angle was too sharp to allow of a field-goal attempt with any hope of success. Nine yards had to be gained if possession of the ball was to be retained. Alton's line had so far proved too strong for assaults between tackles. Consequently there remained, apparently at least, three courses for Mt. Millard. She could try a forward-pass, an off-tackle play or an end run. To Alton the forward-pass seemed the likeliest, since Mt. Millard had shown herself able to gain in that manner. Consequently when the home team sent her kicker back to position well over the thirty-yard line the adversary was sure that a heave across the line would follow, and her backs formed to cover. That the Mt. Millard quarter patted the ground smooth

and knelt to receive the pass from center failed to alter the enemy's mind. All that elaborate preparatory stuff was as old as the hills! The ball would shoot straight to the full-back, who had been on the forwarding end of two of Mt. Millard's heaves, and he would throw. But Alton was due to see a play new in her experience.

While it is an extremely difficult feat to kick the ball over the bar and between the uprights from a position on the thirty-yard line close to the boundary, it is not particularly difficult to accomplish the same thing from a position in front of the goal. And, of course, the difficulty decreases as the center of the line is approached. Doubtless this thought occurred to the Mt. Millard quarter, for when the ball left the hands of the center it didn't go to the kneeling quarter but to the left half, standing some four yards back of the left guard-tackle hole. At the signal the full-back started across the field, followed, when the ball went into play, by the right half and quarter. Left half turned with the ball and, just as the defense yielded behind him, threw it across to the full-back. The pass was lateral and a good fifteen yards in length. Full-back made a clean catch of it, continued for another three or four strides and stopped abruptly. Right half-back and quarter met the first of the enemy, and at that moment the full-back's leg swung, the ball rebounded from the

sod, was met by a capable foot and went upwards and away just as Alton reënforcements came up. The drop-kick was made from a point some eight yards short of the middle of the field and close to the twenty-eight yards, and the ball sailed squarely over the center of the bar!

Of course it was an absolutely impossible sort of play. It just couldn't be done! Alton blankly assured herself of that. But the assurance brought no consolation since, you see, it had been done! Mt. Millard's supporters went quite crazy with delight and the full-back was pummeled by his enthusiastic team-mates. Alton recovering from her surprise, congregated about the officials and protested the play. Captain Jonas declared, doubtfully though, that a drop-kick following a side pass was illegal, but, when instructed to point to the rule covering the point, he could only shake his head.

Mt. Millard's name on the small score-board above the stand was graced by an excited youth with a large figure 3 and the game proceeded. That lone tally was unchanged when the half ended.

There had by that time been three changes in Alton's line-up, all in the second quarter. Cahill had gone in at center for Lum Patten, whose game knee had received a further indignity, Ness had superseded Storer and Keys had taken Walsh's

place at right half. Walsh had shown up rather poorly on defense. Nip had been retired that he might be returned later in fresh condition. In the draped-off corner of the gymnasium floor during the fifteen minutes between the halves Coach Cade talked very quietly and convincingly. They had, he told them, shown themselves able to stop Mt. Millard's line attack. Consequently, the adversary would undoubtedly rely more strongly than before on her aerial game. And she would get away with it unless Alton watched more closely and covered the opposing eligibles. "You must stop trying to guess the play, fellows. You can't do it against a team like the one you're up against to-day. The only way to find what the play is going to be is to use your eyes and your brains and, above all, watch the ball! Don't think that the enemy is going to do a certain thing just because it's what you'd do in her case. She's got a clever quarter in there and he has caught you napping twice already. Watch the ball every minute and follow it close. That's the only way you'll stop Mt. Millard."

The third quarter was Mt. Millard's, although there was no scoring. A forlorn attempt from Alton's thirty-seven yards to put the ball over from a placement kick failed badly some five minutes after the start. Still later, after Alton had made a fine but futile drive down the field from her

own thirty-eight to Mt. Millard's thirty-six, the home team took possession of the ball and by plays off the tackles, two forward passes that netted but twelve yards and a twenty-odd-yard dash by the left half worked the pigskin back to the visitor's twenty-eight. There it was when the third quarter ended.

Nip Storer had already returned to his position at left half and Patten was back at center. Nat Wick, hurt in a savage attack at his position, had yielded to Hop Meecham. Now another change was made, for Ted Ball hobbled on and relieved Bus Lovell. Not that Bus appeared to view it as a relief, however! With two downs remaining, Mt. Millard tried her familiar trick of faking a kick and threw forward. Dutch Kruger, though, had his man covered well and the ball grounded. The Mt. Millard full-back strode off to the thirty-seven yards and held out his arms. But before his foot reached the ball Billy Haines was on top of him and the kick only sent the pigskin bounding back from Billy's body. Followed a wild and frantic pursuit that was finally ended when Fitz Savell fell on the ball close to the forty-five-yard line.

Alton now brought her heavy artillery into play, hurling Jim Galvin and Storer at the wings on short plunges that twice won first downs and took the ball to Mt. Millard's thirty-three. There, how-

ever, the enemy closed up, and after a sweep to the right, with Keys carrying, had failed of more than a yard Galvin tossed across the center to Savell who was downed where he caught for a six-yard gain. Jim smashed out two more at center with Number 14. (The delayed pass play had been used but twice before that afternoon and had failed each time, seeming to prove Chick's contention that it wouldn't fool a wide-awake opponent.) But this time it succeeded, if not greatly, and left the pigskin less than a yard short of the distance. Ted Ball asked for time and conferred with Captain Jonas. Ted favored a field-goal and a tied score, for, with Storer drop-kicking from the thirty-three yards and almost in front of goal, the chance was excellent. But Captain Lowe held other views. The game was close to its end and in his judgment a tied score was tantamount to defeat, and Jonas wanted a victory. While they were still talking, two substitutes ran on. These were Tyron and Hollins, relieving Nip Storer and Larry Keys. Nip raged and Ted Ball protested, but rage and protest carried no weight with the official. Nip went off, plainly incensed, followed more mildly by Keys, and Ted knew that Captain Jonas had won the argument. With Storer out of the backfield there was no one remaining who could be relied on for a field-goal. Of course Coach Cade had sided with Jonas and this was his way of an-

nouncing the fact. Johnny, too, chose to gain all or lose all, and Ted studied the situation. Tyron was a heavy back who had remained a third choice all season. Hollins was a light, fast player who must be provided with safe conduct through the enemy lines before he could prove his value. But Hollins too had more than once completed a forward-pass for a good gain. Ted's brows wrinkled while he used up every second of the two minutes he had demanded. When the whistle blew he had made his decision.

Of course he must set the stage for a field-goal first, and that he did. But when he called his signals Tyron shouted "Over! Over!" That, Ted reflected bitterly, was like the dumb-bell! Tyron could carry a ball and batter a line, but his was no agile brain! Ted called the play again, changing the first signals, and waited until a show of relief on Tyron's countenance indicated that the idea had percolated to the seat of reason. Then he repeated and the ball went back.

But not to Galvin, back in kicker's place. It went to Ted, and Ted swung around with it and, after a tick of time, tossed it toward a speeding form. The whole Alton backfield was moving to the left now, and not only the backfield but Captain Jonas and Hop Meecham and, last of all, Fitz Savell, following around as rear guard. Tyron headed the interference, Bert carried, Galvin ran

beside the latter. It was Jim who met the enemy right end and heaved him aside. Bert found himself slowed by Tyron and swung outside as the defensive end went down. Then he wheeled sharply and cut in. A back lunged toward him out of the mêlée, but Savell charged between, and Bert, his head up and eyes busy, saw the open road ahead.

CHAPTER XIV

DEVORE COMES TO COLLECT

When he thought about it afterwards, and he did think about it a good deal during the next day or two, it seemed to Bert that it had been absurdly simple, that dash from the enemy's twenty-four to the goal line and over. To be sure, just at the last the Mt. Millard quarter had forced him well toward the boundary, but he had never been seriously challenged after he had cut through and he had crossed the last streak of lime with his head up and a watchful eye on the approaching safety man; crossed it, indeed, with an unconscious unconcern that had added to the joy of the already ecstatic Alton watchers. It had been very easy, and, while he was human enough to like the applause he had won, and the enthusiastic pummelings of his team-mates, and all the nice things that had been said to him since, he was convinced that any of his fellow players would have turned the trick just as neatly as he had and that, when all was considered, he had mighty little title to the rôle of hero. Of course he had done his best, had used his head and his speed, but there was no getting

around the fact that it was perfect interference that had won that touchdown and the Mt. Millard game. If Jim Galvin had missed the end, if Fitz Savell hadn't taken out that back, if, in short, the whole team of eleven players hadn't each performed his part perfectly, the play would have fizzled. Where then, reflected Bert, was the glory? Surely the credit should be equally apportioned amongst the team and not given all to him. He was dimly regretful that this was so and wished that he might have somehow really earned the honor that had been accorded him; wished that he might have got away without the help of an army of interferers and made the run on his own. He could have been proud of that. As it was he felt apologetic toward the other fellows of the team and wondered if they were not secretly amused, perhaps nettled, at the praise he was receiving. They didn't appear to be, though. In fact, they had behaved quite as if that touchdown had been a one-man job, a personal triumph for Bert. He couldn't understand that at first.

He would have liked to talk the affair over at length with Chick that Saturday evening, but Chick, while he was about, was not an inviting recipient of confidences. Chick was steaming mad. He had remained on the bench all during the game. Even after Bert had pulled the contest out of the fire with that dash for a touchdown and Coach

Cade had strengthened the team here and there with fresh material in order to hold the enemy during the succeeding three minutes, Chick had not been called on. Shelfer had relieved Savell, and Chick had looked on incredulously. Afterwards he had been bitter toward the coach, declaring that Johnny was trying to humiliate him, threatening to go over to the other's lodgings and have it out with him, on the verge of quitting the team. Bert has tried to pour oil on the troubled waters and the oil had ignited. Chick had sneered that of course Bert couldn't see anything wrong because Johnny was treating him decently; even better than he deserved, Chick seemed to intimate. Bert had frozen up at that and a little later Chick, still hectic with anger, had taken himself away. Bert had hoped that he wasn't off to Coach Cade's to carry out his threatened intention of informing Johnny what he thought of him, and had been half inclined to follow and prevent such a break, but reflection reassured him. Chick was angrier than Bert had known him to be for a long time, and when he was angry he was capable of extremes, but it wasn't likely that he would do anything as suicidal as that. He hadn't seen Chick again that evening, but on Sunday Chick let out that he had played pool with Lester Devore, and borrowed all of Bert's available funds, amounting to four dollars and a half, to pay for his fun.

"For the love of Pete!" exclaimed Bert. "How much did you lose?"

"Oh, this is some I've been owing him," replied Chick evasively. "He always wins, the lucky stiff! I'll pay you back next week."

"I'm not worrying about getting it back," said Bert, frowning. "But—but, great Scott, Chick, that's a pile of money to lose!"

"Don't I know it?" demanded the other peevishly. "That's what I'm sore about. He gets all the breaks, hang him, and I haven't had a stroke of luck at that game for two weeks!"

"Why not quit?" asked Bert.

"And let him get away with nearly—with a whole bunch of my coin?" inquired Chick amazedly. "That's a swell idea! I'm going to keep after that bird till I pluck him, and pluck him good and close!"

"It's my hunch that he's a tough bird," said Bert wryly.

"Tough? He's just a fool for luck, that's all he is. By the way, he's coming up this afternoon after this money. If you're here and I'm not slip it to him, will you? I'll leave it here on the corner of the table."

"How much?" asked Bert from the window-seat.

"Eight," answered Chick. "Tell him that's

all— No, never mind. Don't tell him anything. I'll probably be in, anyhow."

"Try to, will you?" said Bert. "You know, Charles, I don't warm to that Mr. Devore much."

"Oh, he's all right except for being a lot luckier than the law allows."

"Maybe, but I don't crave to entertain him. I'll be over in Lykes around five o'clock, so—"

"What are you going over there for?" interrupted Chick.

"I told Ted Ball I'd be over. He seemed to think my presence would add to his happiness. Better come along."

"I'm going to play some golf with Dozier at three. I suppose Ted's going to tell you how good you are, eh?"

"If he does I promise not to believe him," answered Bert good-humoredly.

"Oh, yes, you will! You'll get a swelled head like all the rest of the heroes; like Ted himself for that matter. What's become of the sports section?"

"Here you are." Bert pulled a portion of the Sunday paper from beneath him and tossed it across. "That was some game at Lakeville yesterday. Have you read it? Kenly fairly mowed 'em down, eh?"

"Just as she'll mow us down a couple of weeks from now," growled Chick. "If you want to make

a killing, Bert, put up some money on her. I know where you'll be able to place it when the time comes."

"Bet against my own team?" asked Bert. "I'd be likely to, wouldn't I?"

"I suppose you wouldn't risk a dollar either way," said Chick pityingly. "When it comes to betting, old scout, one team looks just like another to me. I'd as soon pull down a ten dollar bill on Kenly as on Alton."

"I don't believe it. Anyhow, you're not thinking of doing it, I hope."

"Why not?" demanded Chick impatiently. "You bet to win, don't you? Think I'd back Alton if she was certain to get licked?" Then, as he caught the troubled expression on the other's face, he added: "Oh, well, I'm not likely to have much money to bet on football games, I guess, the way the luck's running."

"I hope you don't have a blamed cent," replied Bert shortly, "if you'd use it that way!"

"Well, I guess you'll get your wish," Chick grunted.

As it turned out, it was, after all, Bert who received Lester Devore when that gentleman came to Number 21 about half-past four. Chick had predicted his return before that hour, but he was still absent. Mr. Devore was attired most becomingly for Sunday afternoon in a suit of gray plaid,

a purplish-gray felt hat, a violet shirt and a burnt-orange—or possibly henna—scarf pierced by a pearl stickpin. Mr. Devore was what you might call a tasty dresser. Still, Bert wondered if he hadn't perhaps done the chap an injustice, for he had a likable look and his manners were not at all bad as he accepted Bert's invitation to sit down and await Chick's return. Perhaps it would have been better had he pulled his sharply-creased trousers up at the knees less impressively, but that was a very little thing after all. Bert offered the weather as a subject of discourse and Devore's conversation was worthy of polite society. He didn't swear once. He admired the room and expressed curiosity about some of its features, a curiosity which Bert courteously gratified. Then Devore said, smiling: "Guess you feel pretty good to-day, eh, Hollins? You won that game, and no error!"

"Oh, did you see it?" asked Bert.

"No, I couldn't get away, but I was talking with a fellow who was over to it. He said you made a sweet run. Right through the other team, he said, and never hurried!"

"He was slightly mistaken, though," said Bert dryly, "for I certainly did hurry."

"Yeah, I guess you had to! But this guy—this fellow said you fooled 'em all pretty clever. Good game, eh?"

"We think so," answered the host, aware that his dislike of Devore was returning. "We naturally would."

"Sure." Devore chuckled. "Make anything?"

"Make anything?" Bert looked puzzled. "Only that touchdown."

Devore laughed. "I meant did you have any money up. But I guess those Mt. Millard kids aren't very sporty. Say, what do you think of our chances in the scrap with Kenly, eh?"

"Our chances?"

"Yeah, Alton's. Who's going to win that, would you say?"

"I wouldn't say," replied Bert. "Kenly's got a pretty good team, I guess, and seems to be getting better every day. What we've got no one seems to know yet."

"That's right. It's no cinch either way, I figure. Only thing is, Hollins, Kenly has the science, if you get me. Look at last year. Lots of guys said you fellows had ought to had that game. But it seemed like the other guys had the sign on you. That's science, ain't it? Sure. Well, I figure it might be like that again. Over at Lakeville they think pretty good of that team. I know because I've got friends over there and I hear 'em talk. Still, that ain't saying we mightn't spring a surprise on 'em, is it? Some play they don't know about, or something, eh? I wouldn't want to bet

you fellows haven't got something sweet up your sleeve, Hollins."

Devore smiled engagingly, inviting confidence. Bert shrugged. "Maybe. A team usually saves something for the final game."

"Of course. And if it's good it turns the trick, don't it? I heard you fellows were working up a pretty sweet forward-passing game and sort of keeping it under cover, but maybe that isn't a fact."

"I don't think it is a fact. So far our forward-passing isn't anything to boast of, Devore."

"That so? I haven't been able to see you fellows in action yet, so I don't know much about your game. What do you think Cade means to spring on those Kenly bozos?"

"Really, I can't say. Probably he will just trust to good, hard football."

"He might do worse," said Devore thoughtfully, his gaze returning again to the folded bills on the corner of the table. The money left by Chick appeared to interest him a great deal. Bert wished that Chick would return. So, perhaps, did Devore, for after a moment he said: "Looks like he wasn't coming back, eh? Maybe I'd better beat it. He didn't say anything about some money he owed me, did he?"

Bert nodded. "Right at your elbow."

Devore took it with elaborate hesitancy, but his

eyes lighted as he did so. He counted the notes and then turned a swift, frowning look on Bert. "What's the idea?" he asked sharply. "There's only eight here!"

"So he told me," said Bert. "Possibly that's all he had handy. Should there be more?"

Devore laughed wryly. "I'll say there should! Why, that guy owes me eighteen-seventy-five, and he's been pushing me back for a week. Say, what's the idea, eh? Ain't he got plenty of it, or what? He talked like he was filthy with the stuff; about his father being a banker and how he had his own private billiard table at home and all that. Stringing me, eh?"

"No, I don't think so," answered Bert coldly. "Chick's father is a banker, all right enough, but if you know anything about bankers, Devore, you know that they have a pretty good idea of the value of money. Which is probably why Chick has an allowance of five dollars a week and no more."

Mr. Devore whistled expressively. "Five dollars a week!" he marveled. "Say, the Old Man's a regular spendthrift, ain't he?" There was a cold sparkle in his eye that informed Bert that his statement had not been accepted at face value. But Devore smiled as he arose and added casually: "Well, no use pushing a guy when he ain't got it, is there? Tell him I'll see him to-morrow night, will you?"

"Look here, Devore," said Bert, "I wish you'd discourage Chick about this pool playing. At least until after the football season's through. He isn't getting any good out of it. He's supposed to be in bed at ten o'clock and he almost never is. And it's taking his thoughts off his game. You seem to be interested in having us win the Kenly game, and I presume you call yourself Chick's friend. Well, if so call off the pool for a couple of weeks, won't you?"

"I'm willing, sure, Hollins, but if he shows up down at Mooney's and wants a game, what about it? I might as well play him as any one else, eh? Best thing's for you to keep him at home, I guess."

"It would be," answered Bert, "but it's not so easy."

"Sort of wants his own way, don't he? I noticed that myself. Well, anyhow, I'll do what I can. I guess you're right about it's interfering with football, for I heard he wasn't going so good lately; and last night he was sure sore as a pup on that Cade guy. Well, see you later!"

Mr. Devore departed, jaunty and cheerful, eight dollars richer than on his arrival, and Bert, discovering that there was no time at present to worry about Chick's finances, hurried away to Lykes.

In Number 5, Ted Ball was in sole possession when Bert entered. Ted arose from under a rus-

tling burden of newspapers and kicked a chair toward the radiator. "Sit low and roost your feet," he invited. "Sort of coolish, isn't it? Well, how's the hero feeling to-day?"

"Shut up," said Bert, grinning. "I'm no hero, and you know it. Listen here, Ted. I want to know something. What's the idea of pretending that I pulled a big stunt yesterday when you know well enough, and every one else knows, too, that it was the rest of you chaps who did the hard work?"

Ted looked mildly surprised. "Hard work? How do you acquire that condition, Bert? The rest of us did our parts, of course, but you carried the old prolate spheroid, didn't you?"

"Yes, but what of it? I couldn't help getting through that line with about six of you going ahead and behind. You see, Ted, I have a funny feeling that all you others are sort of laughing in your sleeve when fellows give me the credit."

"Oh, that's it; I get you now, Bert." Ted observed the caller speculatively for a moment and then shook his head. "You're too modest, old chap. If you don't watch your step you'll never make a football player; a real ne plus ultra one, I mean. You've got to get rid of your modesty first."

"Quit talking rot," grumbled Bert.

"All right. Let me tell you something that, maybe, hasn't occurred to you. When you read in

the paper that some fellow has raced forty or sixty or eighty or something yards and scored a touchdown and has thereby become a hero and a—a popular idol, you—if you're like most folks—don't stop to ask how come that fellow was able to do it. Sometimes, but not often, he did it because he was a remarkable runner and dodger and because Lady Luck paced him most of the way, but most times—about nine times out of ten—he did it because ten other fellows got him started and, say, four other fellows helped him past the secondary defense and, maybe, two others went with him most of the way and upset tacklers and saw him through. All that, old chap, is what generally happens. Can't be any other way—often, for it stands to reason that one man, no matter how gosh-awful good he is, can't attack eleven opponents and get away with it."

"I suppose that's so," said Bert thoughtfully. "And that's what I meant, too. Take yesterday—"

"All right, take yesterday. You made that touchdown because Jake looked after you all season and Johnny Cade taught you how to play and I gave you the signals and the whole team did its part and four or five of us helped you along. So, you see, if you count in Jimmy, the rubber, and a couple of the managers, all of whom did their bit, Bert, quite a few of us had a hand in your stunt.

But the point is that you were the big cheese. If you hadn't been good, mighty good, all our stuff wouldn't have amounted to anything at all. Sort of like firing a rifle, old chap. I aimed and pulled the trigger. Jim and Tyron and Wick and the others were the cap and the powder. Without us there wouldn't have been any explosion and you'd still be in the cartridge. But the cap and the powder did their parts and the bullet shot out. You were the bullet, Bert, and the bullet's what does the execution and brings down the game!"

"Carrying out your simile," laughed Bert, "it's the fellow who aims and shoots who gets the credit, isn't it?"

"Similes," replied Ted, "are like practical jokes. They can be carried too far. It's this way about individual stunts on the football field. Every fellow deserves a certain amount of credit for what the one member of the team perfects, just how much depending on how close to the play he was. That's understood. But they don't all take off their head guards and bow when the stand cheers the hero."

"But why don't they? They have a right to."

"Because—well, I suppose it's because they recognize the fact that, no matter how much they helped, individually and collectively, it was Mr. Hero who brought home the bacon. No fellow, Bert, can pull off a big stunt in a football game

unaided, but, oh, boy, he can sure do himself proud if he makes good use of what help he gets and knows what to do when the interference peters out! Some backs don't know how to use their interference, Bert. You'll see everything set for a big act, and then the runner takes it into his head to break away from interference, or he gets ahead of it or drops too far behind it, and, bingo, some one slips in and nabs him! And there are lots of good backs who can deliver the goods just as long as they can keep their heads down and butt and push and fight. Let them get free, though, with a safety man ahead and a few fellows coming along behind and they don't know where they're at. And only one back in ten ever turns out to be a good broken-field runner, Bert. When he does he's usually a wonder. Either a fellow is poor at it or he's mighty good. So, after you give every fellow on the team his rightful share of credit, the fellow who pulls off the fine long run deserves all the cheering he gets. And that's why you can rest easy about the other chaps laughing in their sleeves at you, Bert. They just aren't doing it!"

"Well," muttered Bert doubtfully. "Anyhow what I did yesterday wasn't worth all the fuss that was made. Why, hang it, a baby could have made that goal line! There wasn't a soul in the way!"

"Well, why wasn't there? If you hadn't slipped around Tyron and then cut over the end you'd

have been stopped for sure. I saw you do that, old chap, and do it yourself with no help from any one else. And how about that Mt. Millard quarter? You had to get by him, didn't you?"

"Sure, but he didn't bother me any."

"Of course he didn't," laughed Ted, "because instead of heading for the goal you swung to the right first and made him think you were making for the other side and then swung back to the left and beat him to the corner."

"Did I?" asked Bert. "I don't remember doing that!"

"Maybe so, but that's what you did. You held that safety man just long enough on the wrong slant to queer his act. Of course it was the fact that you were faster than he was that won for you, but you fooled him besides. I tried to work over to get him but I couldn't make it. Anyway, you didn't need me."

"I wish I had more weight, Ted," said Bert thoughtfully.

"Well, I don't know. Yes, you could stand another ten or twelve pounds, Bert, but I don't see that you need it yet. You see, what helps you is your speed and your blamed elusiveness, and if you had more weight you mightn't carry it so well. And that reminds me that I asked you over here at Johnny's suggestion. I fancy he means to use you more from now on. He seemed to think that

it would be a good idea for you and I to get together and sort of talk over some of the plays that we'll use against Kenly. Sometimes a chap gets a better grip on a play if he kind of pulls it apart and puts it together again and understands just what it's all about; when it's to be used and what's to be expected of it and that sort of thing. Got half an hour before supper?"

CHAPTER XV

FUMBLES

Bus Lovell provided what in stage parlance is termed the "comic relief" that week. Bus had made three fumbles in Saturday's game, and, although he had recovered two of them, Coach Cade decided that Bus needed discipline. So, when a light practice was over on Monday, Johnny requisitioned a scarred and battered ball from Jake and gravely handed it to Bus. "Lovell," he said, "if you recall the talk we had in the gymnasium one afternoon awhile back you'll understand why I'm giving you this. Fumbling, Lovell, is a bad habit for a quarter-back. Keep this with you as a reminder of that fact."

Bus tried to grin, got rather red and finally stammered: "You mean I've got to keep it around, sir? Carry it with me like you said?"

A dozen interested spectators wore very broad smiles and there were chuckles when Mr. Cade replied: "Exactly, Lovell. You're not to part with it for a moment except when you're asleep. Then the ball rests beside you. You might put it on a chair at the head of your bed. You see, Lovell, the idea is to accustom yourself to the sight and

feel of it so that you'll know what to do with it if you run across it in a game."

Conscious of the joyous amusement of those who had lingered for the ceremony, Bus put on a good face. "Very well, sir," he answered as seriously as Mr. Cade had spoken, "I'll certainly hang on to it." He put it under an arm and strode off, followed by the group of hilarious team-mates.

His appearance in dining hall that evening was the signal for a deal of razzing. Warned of his approach, the fellows clapped enthusiastically as he stepped through the door with the football swinging in one hand from the lacing. For an instant Bus was nonplused, but then, composing his countenance, he placed the ball under an arm and made his way gravely along the aisle. The honors might have been his if some wag hadn't started patting a foot in time to Bus's tread. That set them all going, and poor Bus paced the length of the hall to the rhythmic *tramp-tramp* of hundreds of feet. After that every one gave way to laughter and the commotion continued until Mr. Kincaid, in charge, arose and calmed it. Bus's troubles hadn't ended, though, for it at once became a matter of duty on the part of his companions to deprive him of his treasure. If Bus laid the football beside his plate some one reached around behind him and sent it wobbling among the viands. If he placed it in his lap it was instantly

bobbing around under the table, being kicked this way and that, or was out in the aisle endangering the safety of passing trays. If he held on to it with both hands he couldn't eat! Bus began to suspect that the thing was less of a joke than he had surmised. At least so far as he was concerned. During the evening, if he laid the ball down for an instant it mysteriously disappeared, and he learned that eternal vigilance was the price of peace. He finally solved the difficulty by tying a cord through the lacing and hanging the pesky thing around his neck.

By morning it had occurred to some one of Bus's intimates that the humorous possibilities of the football had not been nearly exhausted. His appearance at breakfast had fallen rather flat, and the fun of knocking the ball off his lap had somewhat palled. Hence a new way of adding to the joy of life must be devised. The plan evolved required Bus's consent and participation, and, since Bus was not one to deprive a friend of a little innocent amusement, he gave the first and promised the latter. At quarter to eleven, Bus, who was a member of the Junior Class, repaired to Room C, wherein had already gathered Mr. Kincaid and some forty youths. Mr. Kincaid, on the small platform at the end of the room, snapped his watch shut and nodded toward the door. One of the class, awaiting the signal, arose and proceeded

to close it. As though he had waited outside for that moment—as in reality he had—Bus entered, the faithful football snuggled in one arm, his book and pad in hand and an earnest, detached look on his face. There were empty seats, a very few, near the door, but Bus for once chose to sit close to the preceptor and went sedately down the aisle to the very first row, observed by the class with breathless interest and by the instructor with interest which, if not exactly breathless, was quite as earnest. Bus seated himself, placed the football —still attached to his person by the cord—in his lap, folded his hands and raised an expectant gaze to Mr. Kincaid. Mr. Kincaid leveled a pencil at the ball and asked mildly: "What have you there, Lovell?"

"A football, sir," replied Bus innocently.

"Ah, a football!" The instructor seemed gratified, as though he had suspected the object of being a football and was pleased to have the accuracy of his surmise confirmed. The class maintained a silence quite unusual, anxious to miss no whit of the fun. "You appear," said Mr. Kincaid, "to be quite attached to it."

Bus recognized the jest with a polite smile and fingered the cord as a further indication that he had "got" it. "Yes, sir," he replied, "I am."

"And"—Mr. Kincaid blinked, a method used to indicate guilelessness which fooled nobody—

"and the football seems to be quite as attached to you. A truly beautiful friendship, Lovell."

"Yes, sir." Bus spoke more doubtfully.

"Yes, indeed," went on the instructor musingly, "quite—ah—affecting. Just what was it, Lovell, that drew you together, besides a similarity of mental equipment?"

"Sir?" Repressed snickers from about him confirmed his suspicion that Mr. Kincaid had scored. The instructor was affably patient.

"I asked what first drew you to each other, Lovell, but never mind that. Instead, tell me whether you would be willing to part with your, shall I say alter ego? during a brief period which I propose to devote to the subject of Greek history."

Bus was back on solid ground again. He had been waiting for that question. He shook his head, sadly yet emphatically.

"Sorry, sir, but that's impossible," said Bus firmly.

"Impossible!" Mr. Kincaid clicked his tongue. "Dear, dear! And may I ask—" He paused and peered intently. "Just hold the football up a moment, please, Lovell. Ah, thank you. For the instant I had you confused. Yes, I see. The football is the one with the look of intelligence. As I was saying—"

But what he was saying was lost in the laughter,

laughter in which Bus joined only half-heartedly. Mr. Kincaid looked over the class and blinked in gentle reproof. "As I was saying," he continued, "I am curious to know why you find it impossible to do without your affinity for a mere half-hour or so, Lovell. I hope I am not too inquisitive."

"Mr. Cade's orders, sir," answered Bus with relief. "I have to take it everywhere, sir."

"Ah, really? An extension course in Football, I presume. Remarkable what strides that game is making, isn't it? Is there more to your story?"

Bus explained the situation and Mr. Kincaid listened with undisguised interest. And at the end he settled back and said: "Well, well, what a very clever idea of Mr. Cade's! I shall be anxious to hear how it succeeds, Lovell. And now, having exhausted, not unprofitably I'm sure, some seven minutes of our allotted time, we will turn our attention to less weighty matters."

Whether or not it was due to the football and its accompanying complications, the fact is that Bus was but illy prepared on the subject of Greek History and, as Mr. Kincaid was flatteringly attentive and called on him very frequently, made a poor showing. Just before the gong rang the instructor stepped down from the platform. He held a book in his hand and he stopped in front of Bus. "Lovell," he announced, "I regret to say that out of six questions sent your way you

fumbled four. To be sure, you may fairly be said to have recovered one, but nevertheless the loss of ground was considerable. On one occasion, if you recall, you lost almost a third of Greece! Fumbling, Lovell, is a—ah—most reprehensible failing, and we must do our utmost to correct it. Taking a leaf from the book of a greater master, certainly a more successful instructor, than myself, Lovell, I intrust this volume to you. It is, as you will observe, my own copy of West's Ancient World, Part One. You will find my name on the fly-leaf. I should dislike having anything happen to it, so please guard it tenderly. Don't let it out of your sight, Lovell. Take it with you to recitations and reflections, let it accompany you wherever you go, Lovell, especially to the football field. At night place it beside you while you slumber. Constant companionship, continued proximity, Lovell, will, I sincerely trust, cure you of your lamentable habit of fumbling the facts of Greek History. Class dismissed."

Bus remained behind for a minute after his convulsed class-mates had hurried forth, but it was no use. Mr. Kincaid meant just what he had said, as absolutely ridiculous as it all was! Bus departed with the football bobbing from his neck and West's Ancient World clutched desperately in one hand. He tried putting it into a pocket, but it was just too large for that. In the corridor the news

was already circulating, and Bus was made to pause and exhibit his latest incubus until, patience exhausted, he tore himself from detaining hands and fled. In his room he flung the book distastefully away from him, only to rescue it in a panic, fearful that he had harmed it. Then he put it on the table and glowered at it until, presently, a sense of humor came to his aid and he gave a chuckle. Somewhere, he recollected, his room-mate had a canvas haversack, and he searched until he unearthed it. In it he placed Mr. West's masterpiece and adjusted the straps to his shoulders. Finally he surveyed himself in the mirror. Just what he resembled, with the haversack on his back and the football against his stomach, he couldn't decide, but, at least, he looked different! Fortunately, perhaps, he had but one more recitation before dinner and one after, and at neither of them was he asked to explain his singular likeness to a peddler, for the story had reached even to the ears of the faculty. At dinner his arrival in hall was even a greater personal triumph than last evening, but he didn't mind the razzing a bit. Being the sensation of the hour was compensation enough!

To Mr. Cade, who dwelt outside the campus, the tidings had not reached, and so at three-thirty, when Bus paraded onto the field, trailed by a throng of expectant team-mates, the coach was not

prepared for the spectacle. Bus was appropriately attired in gray canvas pants, gray jersey, gray-and-gold striped stockings, scuffed shoes and hip pads, and he swung a black leather head guard. But he also wore a battered football in front and a mildewed canvas bag at his back, a bag on which appeared in faded black characters the inscription "Troop II, B.S.A." Bus invited notice and won it instantly.

"Lovell, you might rid yourself of that football during practice," said Mr. Cade, laughing a little.

"Yes, sir." Bus moved toward the wheelbarrow, where the balls awaited distribution in a big canvas sack, thereby presenting a rear view to the coach. Mr. Cade stared. Wide grins overspread the faces of the players.

"What's he got on his back?" the coach demanded in puzzled tones of Coles Wistar. Coles choked and turned aside. The coach looked more puzzled, and then suspicious. "Lovell!" he called.

"Yes, sir?" Bus returned, freed of the football.

"What"—Mr. Cade pointed—"is that contraption?"

"Haversack, sir. The Ancient World is inside."

"The ancient—*what?*"

"World, sir," answered Bus gravely. Every one else was shouting with laughter by now. Mr.

Cade laughed, too, suspecting that Bus had contrived a joke to turn the tables.

"The ancient world, eh? So you're Atlas. Is that it? Come clean, Lovell. What's the point?"

"I didn't do very well in Greek History class this morning, Mr. Cade, and Mr. Kincaid said I was to carry West's Ancient World around with me, sir. Just like the football, you know. He said I fumbled too many questions." Bus was grinning now. Mr. Cade's face was a study for a moment. Then he chuckled, and then he laughed, and laughed until the tears came.

"He wins, Lovell," he gasped finally. "Take it off. That's a good one!"

"Think I'd better, sir?" asked Bus doubtfully. "He said—"

Mr. Cade wiped his eyes. "I think it's safe," he answered. "I—I'll assume responsibility, Lovell. And, Lovell."

"Yes, sir?"

"Just so that Mr. Peghorn doesn't follow suit and hang a glass retort about your neck, we'll say no more about the football. I—I know when I'm beaten, Lovell!"

Bus removed the haversack with a sigh of relief. "I guess the football's done its bit, anyway, sir," he said earnestly. "If I fumble again, Mr. Cade, I—I'll eat the fool thing!"

They set about preparing for the Kenly game

that afternoon. Only one contest intervened, that with Alton High School next Saturday, and that was frankly only a practice engagement. From now on every minute of the daily sessions on the gridiron and of the nightly "skull-drills" in the gymnasium would be devoted to the laudable ambition of defeating Kenly Hall. There was a twenty-minute encounter with the long-suffering tackling dummy and much punting and running back of punts before the formation drill began. Bert found himself opposite Storer on the squad that followed Ted Ball up and down the field. Walsh was on Bus Lovell's squad, where, too, at his old position at the tip of the right wing, Chick was holding forth. Chick and Shelfer were dividing that honor of late, with Chick showing far more of finished playing and Shelfer impressing the coaches by his sheer determination. I say coaches, because a former Alton player named Lake had arrived and was giving his serious attention to the linemen, the guards and tackles especially. Still later that week two other graduates showed up, but they remained only a few days and spent more time exchanging reminiscenses on the side-lines than in actual coaching. However, their counsel was valuable to Mr. Cade, and they really did help in the evenings, when the blackboard was hauled out on the gymnasium floor and the plays were drawn thereon and the players, rubber-soled,

walked and trotted through them. The new signals were being learned, and that alone was a very fair task, especially for two or three of the squad whose memories were not of the best. There were eleven line plays inside the ends, six outside, three forward-passes and one punt. These were numbered from 2 to 25, inclusive, omitting 10, 11, 20 and 21. Any number ending in 0 signified a punt. Two series, one of two plays and one of three, were indicated by the numbers 11 and 21. To commit these to memory was a task that called for real concentration.

This Tuesday there were many mistakes made, and Bert made his share. Twice he confused Number 8 and Number 13. The former play was left half through left tackle and the latter was left end around right end, and there was no similarity either in the numbers or the plays. Yet Bert for some, perhaps psychological, reason got mixed badly. It was well toward the end of the week before he rid himself of the haunting fear that he would forever confuse 8 and 13!

However, quarter-backs and coaches were lenient to-day; the former, perhaps, because they were none too certain themselves of the new signals. Even Ted Ball, who had won the reputation of being a shark at calling signals, faltered more than once. Mr. McFadden, who had scouted Kenly Hall several times during the season, came over

at four-fifteen with a team drilled in Kenly plays, and most of the rest of the session was given over by the First to defensive work. Whether the Second had really perfected itself in the rival's style and methods was problematical, but certain it is that the First experienced no great difficulty in stopping the Scrub, even when Mr. Cade gave the ball to the latter on the First's ten-yard line. Bert played through one ten-minute period of the scrimmage and comported himself well enough to win a word of commendation from Mr. Lake, who, with Mr. Cade, hovered about the team like a sternly anxious hen over a brood of young chicks.

"That's the game, What's-your-name! Don't start off blind, but wait till you see where the play's coming. You stopped that nicely, fellow!"

Bert stopped more than one ambitious Scrub back during his ten minutes of service, or helped stop them, and suffered painful if honorable wounds in consequence. But he didn't mind while he was in. Only after he had been relegated to the bench to make way for Walsh, did he fully appreciate his injuries. Then he went over to Jake and had two fingers taped together above a splint and a nice square of plaster applied to his left cheek. The Scrub in its imitation of Kenly was doing a conscientious job!

Walsh stayed in only some four minutes and then yielded to Keys. Walsh was plainly proving

rather a disappointment to the coach. He had weight and was a hard fellow to stop when he got well started, but he was almost phenomenally slow and, to-day at least, mixed signals badly. Bert wasn't afraid of Walsh nowadays, but he was afraid of Keys. It seemed to Bert that Keys was bound to have the call for right half-back position by Saturday; and it was a fair assumption that whoever played on the first-string against Alton High would start the game against Kenly. Of course Keys wouldn't play the big game through, and sooner or later, Bert assured himself, he, Bert, would get in. But sometimes a back had the good fortune to stick it out right to the end, or to within a few minutes of it, and Bert wasn't going to be satisfied with merely saying, "How do you do? Good-by!" to the referee. He watched rather glumly while Keys performed the duties of a half-back and credited Larry with doing considerably better than he really did.

Chick played a full period and showed himself superior to Fitz Savell as a defensive end. Unfortunately, though, he erased whatever good impression he may have made on the coaches when he failed miserably just at the end of the scrimmage to get into position for Galvin's long throw down the field. Chick confessed later that he mistook the signal.

Neither side scored that afternoon and the battle

ended with honors fairly even when it was almost too dark to see the ball ten yards away. Jake fussed and grumbled a good deal during the succeeding half hour, for it seemed that about every other man on the two teams had managed to get himself hurt in some fashion. The injuries were only casual and to be expected, but Jake, swashing iodine around and snipping tape, was a growling pessimist. At this rate, he confided to his grinning patients, there wouldn't be a whole team left by a week from Saturday!

The evening sessions for the First Team interfered badly with Chick's pool program. Mr. Cade generally dismissed them by eight-thirty, although you couldn't count on it, but that left Chick only an hour in which to subjugate Mr. Devore and retrieve his losses, and an hour wasn't nearly enough. So Chick, by Wednesday of that week, was tiptoeing into Number 21 around eleven o'clock, which was a very risky proceeding and one not calculated to sending him leaping out of bed, bright-eyed and refreshed, at seven o'clock the next morning. But getting even with Lester Devore had become almost an obsession with Chick, and school laws and training rules were forgotten. Bert was always fast asleep long before the truant returned, although he sometimes awoke enough to realize that his room-mate was moving about and to wonder what time it was.

It was on Thursday that Bert, finding mail in the box downstairs, tossed a letter across the table to Chick with the remark: "If you're expecting any freight, Charles, it has arrove." Chick looked at the corner of the buff envelope, which bore the name of the railroad followed by the legend "Freight Department," and scowled. Bert busied himself with a letter of his own until an indignant exclamation from the other caught his attention.

"What a nerve!" growled Chick. "Wants me to pay him ten dollars right away because he's 'got use for the money'! Maybe I haven't got use for it, too; or would if I had it! Why didn't he say something about it last night?"

"Oh, that's Devore writing to you, eh?" said Bert. "Well, see here, Chick, can't you pay what you owe him and then keep away from him for a while? How much is it, anyway? Only ten?"

Chick shrugged, hesitated and answered: "No, it's more than that, counting last night. It's—it's sixteen-twenty-five now."

Bert whistled. "How much have you got?" he asked.

"About three and a half. And I owe you—"

"Never mind what you owe me. I've got five—no, about four-fifty. That'll make eight. Borrow a couple somewhere and get it to him. After all, he's got a right to it, I suppose."

"You lend me a couple and I'll pay him five,"

said Chick. "That's enough for him. He knows he'll get it all when I have it. I wouldn't be owing him so much if he didn't always say, 'Oh, that's all right. Pay when you get ready!' I tried to get ten from the old man, but he's as tight as a bowstring, hang it. Wrote back that I was thirty dollars overdrawn already! Gosh, he keeps track of every sou he lets go of! Next dad I have won't be a banker, I'll bet!"

"Well, here's two," said Bert, "and for goodness' sake put some more with it and hush him up. And for Pete's sake, Chick, stop playing pool with him until you get yourself squared. What time did you come wandering in last night, anyway? It seemed like the middle of the night to me."

"Oh, it wasn't that bad," said Chick. "Thanks for this, Bert. That makes six fifty, doesn't it? You'll have to remember because I'm likely to forget. I'll slip over to Mooney's after dinner and leave it for him."

"Doesn't he have any home?" inquired Bert. "Doesn't sleep at Mooney's, too, does he?"

"He says leave it at Mooney's," answered Chick, "so that's what I'll do. I hope he chokes!"

"Well," murmured Bert, "I won't go that far, but hanged if I'd loosen the knot if he was choking!"

CHAPTER XVI

PEANUTS AND CONVERSATION

THURSDAY afternoon saw a slight let-up on the field. Preliminary work was lighter and so much time was spent on signal drill that there was only enough daylight left for one scrimmage period. That, however, went to fifteen minutes. Coach Cade used all his second-string players before the fracas was over, which means that both Bert and Keys served as right, or Number 2, half-back. Chick, also, saw service and did better than he had done before that week. The Second Team stuck to what they fondly believed were Kenly formations and plays and, while these went fairly well in midfield they petered out nearer the goal line. Second got a nice placement kick over, but failed to score a touchdown. First, using a more diversified attack than it had shown all season, twice crossed the adversary's line. There were several forward-passes that went smoothly for short gains, two of them received by Chick; one long heave, Galvin to Kruger, that was good for twenty-two yards; some well-placed punts by Nip Storer and some good gains by the backs. The most startling performance by the First, however, was

an end-around play featuring Fitz Savell. Fitz shot outside left end and reeled off thirty-four yards before he was stopped by the Scrub's safety man. Bert made two gains of seven and eleven yards respectively on off-tackle plays and once made a shorter though timely romp to a first down outside end. Galvin and Storer first, and then Ness and Couch, accounted for many advances through the line. On the whole the First showed power, speed and smoothness of execution; although it must be confessed that Bus Lovell, who followed Ted as general, had much difficulty with his signals and slowed up the playing considerably on occasions. What Bus did not do, however, was fumble!

There was a cheer meeting that evening in Assembly Hall—there had been two or three previously—and Bert and Chick joined the throng and sang and shouted as heartily as any. Mr. Fowler, the English instructor and head of the Faculty Committee on Athletics, addressed the meeting and kept it laughing for twenty minutes. ("Gee," murmured Chick, "why can't he be like this in class?") Mr. Cade said a few words and was followed by Captain Jonas Lowe. Jonas was just as much at home on a platform, just as much at ease addressing an audience, as a cow on a tight-rope. He arose in painful embarrassment and lurched

to the front with the enthusiasm of a malefactor approaching the electric chair. Then he put his large hands in the pockets of his capacious trousers, cleared his throat and took his hands out again. By that time the applause had dwindled to comparative silence, a silence punctured by chuckles and snickers of amusement. Jonas clasped his hands tightly behind him, rocked backward on his heels and frowned furiously. Then he spoke. Fearful, perhaps, that he wouldn't make himself heard, he opened his remarks in a voice that, as husky as it was, might easily have been heard on the far side of Haylow Hall.

"Fellows! And gentlemen! You know why you're here—why I'm here. I've got to say something about the Team and about licking Kenly Hall. Well, that's all right. We'll do it. [Enthusiastic applause mingled with laughter.] We'll lick Kenly. We've got a pretty good bunch this year and—and we've been well coached. Mr. Cade is a great guy. [More applause.] Of course Kenly's got a pretty good bunch, too. That's what they tell us, anyway. But we've got a pretty good —I mean, our team's all right, too. Got a good, strong line and a bunch of clever backs. Fellows like Jim Galvin and Nip Storer and—and others. Got a center you can't beat, Lum Patten. Lum's a great guy. [Cheers and laughter.] Got a pair

of fine tackles. Got good ends. Got some corking plays. And we're all fit. Got to thank Jake for that. Jake's a great trainer. [Cheers for Jake.] So we're all set, like I told you, to play the best game we know how, and if Kenly beats us it's going to be a big surprise to them, I guess. It will be to me, anyway. But she won't do it. You guys —you fellows do your part and we'll do ours. That's fair enough. Got to have the support of the School. Got to know we have it. Helps a lot. Plenty of cheering, you know. Everybody in line for a victory. That's the idea. All together in the right spirit. Lots of it, too. Well, that's all. We've got a pretty good bunch and we'll do the best we know how. Much obliged."

Jonas, perspiring freely, retired to his seat amidst loud acclaim and Freeman Naughton called for "a cheer for Captain Lowe, fellows, and make it good!" After that they sang a few more songs, cheered the Team vociferously and departed.

Bert and Chick joined forces with "Judge" Anstruther, Billy Haines and Hank Howard and wandered into Upton and up to the assistant manager's room. Judge could do weird and wonderful things on a strange looking contraption that was about half-way between a guitar and a mandolin—with leanings toward several other instruments—and they had a musical evening. Hank Howard proclaimed his ability to play beautifully

on a harmonica and Billy Haines disappeared and returned with one a minute or two later. After that, although Billy knew almost none of the tunes that Judge knew, the program took on an added interest. About the only thing the two performers could thoroughly get together on was that ribald composition, "Oh, Doctor!" This was a rimed insult set to music which Alton had once sung at the football games with Kenly. Of late it had become taboo, however, and when it sometimes threatened to break out it was quickly suppressed by the cheer leaders. On such occasions as this, though, "Oh, Doctor!" might be sung to the heart's content without frantic "shushings." So with Judge Anstruther beating the strings of his exotic instrument and Billy swaying ecstatically with his hands cupped about the borrowed harmonica the others sang loudly:

"Oh, Doctor! Oh, Doctor, now won't you hurry, pray?
There's been a crime most awful committed down our way!
Pull on your breeches, grab your bag,
Drop the shafts on the old gray nag
And hurry, hurry, hurry, hurry, Doctor!

"Oh, Doctor! Oh, Doctor, and will the patient live?
He's twisted, and he's busted, he's riddled like a sieve!
His center's in a frightful shape;
I guess you'll have to operate!
Oh, hurry, hurry, hurry, hurry, Doctor!

"Oh, Doctor! Oh, Doctor, the pearly gates we view!
They're open very wide now! Oh, can't you pull him through?
Old Kenly's bad and getting worse;
Inform the sexton, send the hearse!
Oh, hurry, hurry, hurry, hurry, Doctor!"

By the end of the first verse reënforcements had appeared from neighboring rooms, and when the song had been concluded the applause was so hearty and insistent that the musicians had to begin again. As the room was now filled to capacity the encore completely drowned the music. A rumor that Mr. Offerman was on his way upstairs finally reduced the chorus to its original number and sent Judge Anstruther into the gentle strains of an Hawaiian melody. Mr. Offerman, however, didn't materialize and the party broke up in a disappointed mood.

The weather, which had been on the whole particularly obnoxious for a fortnight, changed during Thursday night, and when Friday dawned the world was drenched in a gray mist, the air was balmy and one rather expected to hear bluebirds cheeping or cawing or whatever it is that bluebirds do. Chill, cloudy days, cold, blustery days were no more for the while and Indian summer had returned from over the purple hills. By the time breakfast was over the haze had vanished under the warmth of an ardent sun and brick walks and

stone walls were steaming gently. Groups of boys crowded the dormitory steps, windows were open, with curtains aflutter, and the campus grass seemed to have grown a full shade greener under its sere and yellow tips. Of course no one wanted to do any work. That's the trouble with such days. A fellow just wants to stick his hands deep into his pockets and lean against something—if he can't sit down—and think long and lazy thoughts, thoughts on any subject save study and recitations and English themes due at noon and letters postponed since Sunday. It's an effort even to yawn!

Fortunately practice was light that afternoon, for even the most ambitious were unable to move out of a walk unless driven to it by the sharp voice of authority. Footballs had a way of coming down yards distant from their expected landing places and of slipping out of nerveless fingers, and cleated football shoes had apparently added several pounds of weight since yesterday. There was no scrimmage, and after a signal drill of half an hour the squad was released. Most of the First Team repaired to the second gridiron after getting back into mufti and watched the Scrub play its one outside game of the season. Southport Second was the opponent. Bert, his feet over the back of the seat in front of him, basked in the warmth and took much pleasure in watching his recent opponents in practice pant and perspire as they charged

over the gridiron. For once at least he was content to sit in idleness and watch others gain the glory. Beyond him, widely spaced since there was plenty of room on the stand to-day and the idea of contact with another was obnoxious in such weather, sat other members of the First, lazily, even somnolently. Occasional words of approval aimed at the Second seldom reached the field. You might have all the will in the world to shout loudly, yet what resulted was merely a sleepy murmur. Into Bert's paradise of contentment crept the serpent.

Well, he didn't exactly creep, either; stumble would be a better word. And for a serpent he was undeniably rotund. Perhaps likening him to a boa constrictor after a hearty meal might go unchallenged, but the simile is inapt. And this particular serpent, even if he had had a hearty meal, was still eating as he flopped down to a seat beside Bert with a muttered: "*Saluer, mon brave!*"

"'Lo, Tommy," responded Bert weakly. "That's rotten French."

"Sure. Have a peanut?" Tommy extended a sack and Bert managed to raise his hand and dip into it. "Some weather, eh? Feel like a lotus eater. Couldn't find any lotuses—or is it lotii?—and had to get peanuts."

"Penii," corrected Bert.

Tommy grinned and tried to hit Watkins, of the Scrub, on the head with a shell. His effort

fell short and he sighed. "Who's ahead?" he inquired.

"Second. Two quarts."

"Two quarts of what?"

"Perspiration. Scrubs just claimed a foul on Southport, but the referee wouldn't allow it."

"Go ahead," said Tommy. "I'll bite. What was the foul, Mister Johnsing?"

"Southport trainer gave them sweet spirits of nitre to increase their—er—humidity. Clearly against the rules."

Tommy viewed him anxiously. "Better move back into the shade," he advised. "Gee, I didn't realize the sun was so hot! No scoring yet, eh?"

"No. Where's your hat, Tommy?"

"Ate it." That was Tommy's invariable answer to the pesky question. "Help yourself."

Bert groaned and dipped again. "Do you ever stop eating?" he inquired.

"Frequently. No practice for you guys today?"

"How do you mean, no practice?" said Bert indignantly. "We were at it four hours. Anyway, it seemed that long. How come you weren't on hand with your invaluable advice, Tommy?"

"I was doing a composition and fell asleep. Woke up with my fountain pen stuck in my left ear. Dreamed I was being hung."

"I don't get the relationship between the dream

and the—whatyoucallit—actuality,'' sighed Bert.

''Nor I—at first. Guess the pen sticking into said ear suggested hangman's knot. Don't they put the knot against the left ear?''

''Honest, I forget. Seems to me, though, the last time I was hung it was under my chin, but maybe it slipped. Here goes for a touchdown.''

''Bet you!''

''You're on for a bag of peanuts.''

Bert lost, for Southport got her back up and selfishly refused to let the Alton Scrub left tackle through the center, although all the latter asked was a scant two yards. After Southport had punted from behind her goal line the whistle blew, faintly as though exhausted, and the half was at an end. The shadow of the roof crept over the front of the stand and Bert perked up a bit.

''How are you betting on the Kenly game, Tommy?'' he asked. ''Still bearish?''

''No, and never was. I said right along that we'd beat 'em if Johnny Cade tumbled to himself and you fellows humped yourselves a bit. We'll win by a couple of scores next week.''

''What? I thought you were predicting total ruination, Tommy. What's changed the colossal mind?''

''Well, for one thing Johnny went and got rid of a lot of stiffs like Tate and Meecham and your babyhood friend, Chick Burton.''

"Wrong, Tommy. Chick's got a good chance to play, I guess."

"You're a rotten guesser, Bert. Oh, he might get in for a little old minute or *deux.*"

"No, I mean for the whole *soixante,* young chap; anyway for *la plupart.*"

"*Tant s'en faut,*" responded Tommy, "meaning you're talking foolishment. Chick's no use this year, Bert, and Johnny's discovered it. You know it, too, just as well as I do."

"Oh, come, why pick on Chick? Of course he's had his bad days, but so have all of them."

"Not so *mal* as Chick's," said Tommy decidedly. "If I thought there was any chance of Johnny using Chick Burton against Kenly I'd—"

"What would you do, son?" asked Bert amusedly.

"Put a stop to it."

Bert laughed. "Tommy, you're delicious! Pass the peanuts. How would you go about it, young fellow?"

Tommy wagged his head knowingly and screwed up his eyes as one who could tell but wouldn't. "Never you mind," he murmured. "I could do it."

"Who's had a touch of the sun now?" jeered Bert. "Sounds like you and Johnny are pretty thick. Does everything you say, eh?"

"That's all right, Monsieur Alexandre *l'ha-*

bile!" (Bert groaned in protest.) "I'm not talking through my hat—"

"That is to be seen," murmured Bert. "Though why you didn't say *chapeau*—"

"And if I had to, if it was necessary for the—the success of the Team, I could put a spoke in Burton's wheel all right, all right!"

Bert frowned. "Don't talk silly, Tommy! Just what are you getting at, anyway?"

But Tommy shook his head again, filled his mouth with peanuts and looked suddenly extremely secretive, even stupid. Bert grunted. "That sort of talk isn't nice, Tommy. Better lay off."

"All right." Tommy used a superior tone that made the other frown again. " 'Nough said. Have a peanut. Go on. I've got another bag coming to me."

Bert declined, and after a minute he asked: "What other reason have you for changing the old mind? Besides the changes in the team, I mean."

"Well, I've seen Kenly play, for another thing."

"You have? When?"

"Last Saturday. Goodall and I went over."

"How were they?" asked Bert eagerly.

"Good. They've got a nice-looking gang."

"Well, then—"

"But we can beat them if we play lively foot-

ball. They're sort of—well, not exactly slow, but —now what's the word?"

"Use your French," advised Bert.

"Don't have to. Uninspired's what I wanted. That's how they struck me. They looked like a team that could drag a heavy load all day but wouldn't have sense—no, imagination enough to run away!"

"Run away! Why should they run away?"

"I was speaking metaphorically," said Tommy with dignity. "What I mean is, those guys will do what the coach tells them to do all right, but they haven't—aren't— Now, look here, you know as well as I do that there's such a thing as football sense—or something. When a team hasn't got it and runs against something that isn't—er—provided for, if you see what I'm trying to get at—"

"You're talking about self-reliance, aren't you?"

"Well, I mean those guys aren't the sort to rise to the occasion. They lack football—football—"

"Instinct!"

"That's it," said Tommy relievedly. "Instinct. And initiative, too. I guess initiative's what I've been trying to think of."

"And you think we have those things?"

"Yes, most of you have. You have, for one. So has Ted Ball and Nip Storer and Galvin and Kruger and—"

"Gosh, I don't believe I have, Tommy! Ted, yes; and maybe those others. But me—" Bert shook his head doubtfully. "Anyway, how can you tell by seeing a team in action once whether it's got initiative, Tommy?"

"I can," answered the other stoutly. "It shows in the way they go about things, the way they handle themselves. You can't fool me. Say, did I tell you that you were good and that you'd make the team or didn't I?"

"You did," acknowledged Bert.

"Yes, and I said you'd do most of the scoring against Kenly, too, didn't I?"

"Something of the sort. Don't you wish you hadn't?"

"No. Things generally come out the way I say they're going to, Bert. You wait until a week from to-morrow and then tell me if I was right or wrong."

"I will, Tommy. And I'll do this, too. If you prove right I'll buy you enough peanuts to last you to Christmas!"

Tommy chuckled. "Better not get rash, *mon demi-derrière*. I get awfully hungry when cold weather comes. Besides, you might pay that bet first!"

"Shut up! Here's a dime. Go eat yourself to death."

"Better give me another and be on the safe

side," laughed Tommy. "Here they come again. Go on in there, you mutts, and do something!" Tommy's voice arose to something approaching its wonted penetration and vehemence, and the stand spoke approval and encouragement.

"That's the stuff, Tommy! You tell 'em, boy!"

Tommy looked over his shoulder, grinned and shot a peanut at the nearest speaker. "*Fermer votre* trap, Hink!" he admonished.

Possibly Mr. McFadden had talked like a Dutch uncle during intermission. At all events, the Second Team came back strong and played a rather different brand of football during the third and most of the fourth quarter. The stand woke up and cheered encouragement and Tommy offered caustic criticism, and the Alton Scrub marched on to glory. Glory was represented by a single touchdown, minus the point which should have followed, and one field-goal. The touchdown came soon after the resumption of hostilities in the third period and the field-goal closed the ceremonies in the fourth. Between the two events Southport made a determined but fruitless effort to score and hurled passes to all points of the compass. Tommy observed disgustedly that they'd wear out the sod, throwing the ball around on it like that. From which you are to understand that the passes were usually not completed.

Chick had gone to the room directly after prac-

tice, announcing a virtuous resolve to do some studying that football—and other interests—had interfered with, but when Bert reached Number 21 he found the student sound asleep on the window-seat, an open book astride his chest.

CHAPTER XVII

BERT IS SENT FOR

The "Flubdub," which had been mildly disapproving of the coach and the conduct of football affairs, changed its tune in the issue of that week. It found many complimentary things to say of the Team and it insinuated that those who had been criticizing Mr. Cade and his methods had formed their verdict too soon. The games with Oak Grove and Mt. Millard, declared the paper, proved that, in spite of certain discouraging aspects visible early in the season, Alton football was in a healthy condition, and that although progress had been slow it had also been sure. The "Flubdub," in short, was suddenly optimistic and didn't care who knew it.

On another page, however, was printed a comparison of the Alton and Kenly Hall teams based on their season's records that seemed to provide scant grounds for optimism. Both elevens had played six games so far, Kenly had won five and lost one, scoring 114 points to the opponents' 45. Alton had won three games, lost two and tied one, scoring 63 points to the opponents' 35. It might have been claimed for the latter that her schedule

had been slightly more difficult, but the claim wouldn't have been easy of proof. Kenly had met but three teams which had played Alton, and aside from those there was no basis for comparative scores.

Alton took the High School contest on Saturday not at all seriously, viewing it purely as a practice game. She did, however, hope to meet with enough opposition to try out her defense. The High School eleven was completing a fairly successful season, and, while it was a light team, it was reputed to be fast and to be well handled by a clever quarter, a lad named Forster, who, it was hoped and expected, would enter Alton next Fall. Mr. Cade started the game with his first-string players on duty. Keys played right half, displacing Walsh who now seemed to be out of the running as a first-choice back. Toward the middle of the second period the coach began to make changes in the line-up, however, and before the half ended more second-string than first-string fellows were on the field. Bert substituted Keys while the second quarter had some six minutes to go and when High School, by some fast and tricky running plays, had carried the pigskin to Alton's twenty-one yards. At about the same period Joe Tate took Dutch Kruger's place. Dutch had been fooled frequently, his end of the line proving High School's best bet. Joe took hold in good style and

spoiled the next attempt around his position, and, after High School had tried a forward-pass into the zone and failed at it, she faked a drop-kick and smashed at the left guard position, her full-back carrying. Nat Wick was carried out by the interference and the full-back shot through for all but two yards of the required distance. On fourth down the same play was tried again, the point of attack this time being at the left of center. Certain that a kick was really forthcoming, Alton allowed herself to be caught napping and the High School plunger was through before the secondary defense rallied. It was Bert, coming in hard and fast, who nailed the enemy. He couldn't stop the full-back, though, until Patten, breaking loose from the interference, crashed into them both. It was that timely aid that laid Bert out flat for the whole two minutes, with every atom of breath on a vacation. While he recuperated with the aid of Jake the chain was brought in and the distance measured. High School had failed of a first down by some four inches! Alton speedily kicked out of danger, and for the rest of the playing time Bert was rather too done up to do himself justice. Bus Lovell, though, was easy on him and his duties were chiefly defensive until just before time was called for the half. Then a split play with Bert carrying inside tackle was sprung, and Bert, conscious of being still somewhat limp, and nervously

fearing he might mess the play up, started too soon, was forced to slow up for the pass and reached the line "on the wrong foot." A High School forward nailed him for no gain. Before Bus could call his signals again the whistle blew, and Bert, for once, was glad to hear it.

Yet Coach Cade let him go back when the third quarter started and he played well into the last period and accounted for one long gain and several short ones. He brought the Alton sympathizers to their feet when he took a forward-pass from Galvin well off toward the side of the field—Savell had gone in back of the enemy center as if to catch there—and dodged his way over four white streaks before he was upset. Forty-three yards he raced for a forty-seven-yard gain, and after he had released the ball on High School's nine yards it took Galvin just two plunges to carry it across. That tackle, though, had about finished Bert so far as present usefulness was concerned, and Coach Cade took him out after the score had been made, and Larry Keys went back in.

That was Alton's third score, for she had gone over the High School line twice in the third period. It also proved to be her last, and the final figures were 20 to 0. On the whole, in spite of two scares, Alton had not had much difficulty with the adversary. Nor had she been provided with much work for her line on defense, since High School had

early recognized the futility of attacks inside the tackles. In one way, though, the home team had profited. She had been shown that her ends were not yet good enough to cope with a really fast and clever running game. Joe Tate had shown up better on defense than any of the other three ends who had been tried that afternoon, and it was predicted that he would displace Dutch at the left wing. The prediction proved wrong, however, for Dutch continued to hold the position, doubtless in recognition of his offensive ability. As for Bert, he went back to Upton convinced that, in spite of that one fortunate stunt, he had finally and conclusively lost out to Keys in the struggle. He was rather silent, a fact not apparently noticed by Chick, since Chick was silent too.

Chick had played during nearly a half of the game and had done poorly, and he knew it and was at once puzzled and resentful. All the fall he had made light of his derelictions, convinced of his ability to play as good football as he had last season. It was Chick's secret contention that Coach Cade should be as convinced of the fact as he himself was and so view occasional failures with a lenient eye. Now, however, Chick had begun to doubt. To-day he had earnestly and wholeheartedly tried to be the old Chick again, to show Johnny and all the others who had been viewing him askance that when it pleased him to he could

play the end position as it should be played; even a little better! And he had failed. And he didn't know why he had failed. Time and again runs had gone around him, time and again he had been put completely out of the play. And this not against a strong team but against a confessedly mediocre one! He tried to understand it and failed. Or almost. He finally entertained the theory that not his body but his mind had played him false. Looking back it seemed that his former ability to diagnose the play and act quickly had been lacking. And it came to him that, despite earlier indifference, he now wanted intensely to make good in this his last year of Alton football!

There was no evening session in the gymnasium this Saturday night and Chick had tentatively agreed to accompany Bert and two others to a lecture in the auditorium. He wasn't particularly interested in excavations in Central America, but Bert had pleaded and he had consented—with reservations. Yet when Bert tried to find him at eight o'clock he wasn't to be found, and no one that Bert enquired of could supply tidings of him. Bert suspected that a trip to Mooney's would reveal the truant, but there was no time for that; nor was there much inclination. Bert had become rather disgusted with his chum's inability to tear himself from the society of Lester Devore.

Chick was a little out of patience with himself

that evening on the same score. It was foolish to go back to Mooney's and get plucked again, for he would be plucked without a doubt. The idea that he would one day succeed in winning back the money he had lost—quite a considerable sum by now, even if not all paid—had had to be abandoned. Chick was at last satisfied that Devore was a better pool player than he was. Also, he had a sneaking suspicion that Devore had let him win on the infrequent occasions when he had won merely to coax him on to increasing his wagers. He wasn't convinced of it, for Devore could be disarmingly frank and ingenuous when he tried to be, and it was hard sometimes not to credit the sincerity of his regret when the luck continued in his favor. To-night Chick didn't mean to play. He couldn't afford to, for one thing, for he had just twenty cents in his pocket. He meant to look on awhile. That would be a lot more interesting than hearing some bespectacled old geezer ramble on about the Incas, or whoever the folks were that used to live a couple of billion years ago down in—oh, that place where the chewing gum comes from! Besides, Chick was in low spirits to-night, anyway, and he sighed for lights and laughter and the familiar sound of the clicking balls. Of course Les might dun him for the money he still owed, but a lot of good it would do him! You can't get blood from a stone!

The lecture was interesting, but it was a bit too long, and Bert, for one, got tired of staring at stereopticon views thrown on a screen at the back of the platform long before the entertainment ended. He accompanied Ted Ball and Lum Patten over to Lykes and when Lum insisted on their coming into his room he went and stayed until twenty minutes to ten. They talked a lot of football, and Bert was surprised when Lum acknowledged that he had hot and cold shivers whenever he thought of the Kenly game. Bert had supposed such evidences of nervousness confined to inexperienced players like himself. Then Ted chuckled and said: "I've never been able to sleep more than three or four hours the night before a big game, fellows. Sounds crazy, I know, but it's a fact. Last year Coles was up reading poetry to me, Robert Frost's, it was, for more than two hours. He had a theory that poetry would put me to sleep, but I guess he got hold of the wrong brand. Say, I'll bet that if I could get a solid eight hours of sleep next Friday night I could play a wicked game Saturday! But I shan't. I'll lie awake for hours, going over signals, playing the whole blamed game in advance, from beginning to end, and wake up feeling like—like something just out of the wringer! Wonder if I can get hold of a bottle of soothing syrup!"

"I sleep pretty well," confided the center, "and

generally eat a good breakfast. But I sure hate to think about the old game. Of course, after the whistle toots and the ball's in the air I'm all right. But until then I just have to keep my mind off the thing. How's it take you, Bert?"

"That's the funny part," answered Bert in puzzled tones. "I'd ought to be scared, but I haven't really thought much about it. Of course last year I didn't have any reason to worry, because I didn't have any idea of getting in. Perhaps that's why I'm not nervous now. I mean there isn't much chance of my starting the game, and by the time I do get in I'll be sort of used to it. Maybe that isn't very clear—"

"Fine thing to keep your nerve like that," commented Ted, "and I don't want to say a thing to shake you, Bert, but if you don't start against Kenly I—well, I'll swallow the ball!"

Bert looked startled, then skeptical. He turned a questioning glance toward Patten, but Lum shook his head. "Don't ask me," he said. "I don't get to the conferences, Bert. 'Mine but to do or die.'"

"Well, I think he's just trying to get my goat," said Bert, viewing Ted doubtfully. Ted grinned.

"That's it," chuckled Lum. "He's fixing you so you won't be able to sleep either and can read poetry to him for a couple of hours."

When he reached Upton and was making his way

toward the staircase a boy of about eighteen came toward him from the other end of the first floor corridor. He wasn't an Academy youth; that fact was apparent even before he spoke.

"Say, Buddie, where's Room 21, huh?"

"Next floor. Who do you want?"

"Guy name o' Hollins. 'S he live here?"

"That's me," answered Bert. "What do you want with me?"

The stranger looked suspicious. "How do I know you're the feller, huh? I got a message for him. You show me where he lives, huh?"

"I tell you I'm Hollins," declared Bert impatiently. "Who's the message from?"

The boy, who looked as if he ought to be hanging around a down-town corner, looked dubious a moment and then gave a shifty glance up and down the corridor. Several doors were open and there was a low hum of talk from the lighted rooms, but no one else was within earshot. "All right. Know a guy named Barton, or something?"

"Burton? Yes."

"Well, say, he wants you to leg it over to Mooney's. Know it, huh? Billiard joint over on—"

"I know Mooney's. What's he want me for? What's the rest of the message?"

"That's all. Just come over to Mooney's. It was Mike himself give me the word."

"Mike?" repeated Bert, puzzled.

"Yeah, Mike Mooney. I was goin' by, see, an' he calls me over. 'Beat it up to the Acad'my, he says, an' find Upton Hall and tell a guy name o' Hollins in Room 21 he's wanted here. Tell him Burton sent for him.' I don't know what's up, but I seen three or four guys standin' 'round on the inside an' another guy sittin' in a chair, an' I guess some one got hurt, huh?"

"Hurt!" exclaimed Bert. "All right, I'll come. You tell him—"

"Tell him nothin'! I'm goin' home, see."

The youth vanished and Bert instinctively started up the stairs for his cap. Then, realizing with dismay that it was already a quarter to ten, he turned and hurried after the messenger.

CHAPTER XVIII

MR. CADE RECEIVES

He made quick time down the walk to the gate, through State street to West and so into the Saturday night throngs. The messenger's theory that Chick had been hurt, alarming for the instant, was soon discarded by Bert. What was far more probable was that Chick had played pool again, lost and was unable to meet his obligations. Probably Mooney was holding him as hostage. Bert frowned at the recollection that his present wealth was represented by two silver quarters and one nickel. If Chick's indebtedness exceeded fifty-five cents he was, Bert thought, likely to remain a hostage!

Mooney's was doing a land-office business when Bert reached it. The long vista of green tables was half shrouded in blue smoke through which coatless players moved to and fro. The lines of chairs on each side held almost uninterrupted rows of spectators. The click of the ivory balls and the tapping of cues were barely heard above the steady bedlam of talk. Near the entrance a cigar case and a desk met at an angle, and the square space behind was used as a sort of office. Chick's head

was visible above the cigar case as Bert's glance roved away from the tables. Nearby stood a small, wiry, leather-cheeked man whom Bert guessed to be Mike Mooney. There were none others inside the inclosure. Bert went forward and leaned across the display of cigars.

"Did you send for me, Chick?" he asked.

Then he saw for the first time that Chick's forehead was swathed in a rough bandage and that there was a large red stain against the white cloth.

"What happened?" he exclaimed.

Chick turned his head slowly and grinned. He looked pale, and the grin was palpably effected only after an effort. The proprietor interposed briskly. "You his friend?" he asked Bert. "Well, say, get him out of here, will you? It don't do my place no good to have him sittin' around like that."

"Why, yes, but—but what—how—"

"Shot off his mouth," explained Mike in a lowered voice. "Feller biffed him with a cue. I didn't see it, and I don't know what they was jawin' about, but that's how I got it. He's all right now. Sort of woozy, though, and you'd better get a taxi, I guess."

"I'll walk," said Chick, pulling himself from his chair and wincing as he moved. "Sorry to bother you, Bert, but I was a bit dizzy. Much obliged to you, Mr. Mooney."

"That's all right, young feller, but listen to me, will you? You play pool somewhere else, see? I run a respectable place, and I don't want no trouble-makers in here, see? I ain't saying whose fault it was, mind, and I don't care. And no hard feelings, see? But I'd be just as pleased if you kept away. And that goes for the other guy, too."

"All right," replied Chick wearily. "Come on, Bert."

Outside Bert asked anxiously: "Sure you'd better not ride, Chick? It won't take a minute to find a cab."

"I'd rather walk. The air feels good. Gosh, that was a nasty thump he gave me!"

"Who did it? How did it happen? Never mind now, though. Better take my arm, old chap."

Chick accepted the suggestion and for a few minutes they went slowly along the street, making their way with difficulty through the throng. Chick had set his cap on his head and it partly covered the blood-soaked bandage, and so his appearance attracted no attention. Presently, reaching West street and less crowded sidewalks, Chick began to talk.

"I suppose it's after ten, isn't it? Afraid I'm making a mess for you, Bert. Hope we don't run into a faculty."

"Only a minute or two after," answered Bert.

"Keep your head down and we'll make it, I guess."

"Afraid I can't." Chick attempted a chuckle. "Have to hold it up, Bert. If I don't it throbs horribly. Have we got any arnica in the room?"

"I think so. If we haven't I can find some easily enough. Is it much of a cut?"

"I don't know, but it feels a yard long. A fellow bathed it in cold water and it hurt like the dickens. I got sort of faint and Mooney asked if he couldn't send for some one to help me home and I told him to send for you. I guess he was afraid I'd want the ambulance and get the cops on the scene! How did they find you? Were you in the room? Any one hear about me?"

Bert explained as they went along State street between buildings gradually changing from shops to residences. Then: "You haven't told me yet who hit you, Chick."

"Les Devore. He got nasty because I wouldn't play with him. I just went there to look on. I only had twenty cents and I told him so, but he said it didn't matter, that I owed him a lot already and a couple of dollars more wouldn't matter. I said he'd get his money all right, but I didn't intend to owe him any more. Then he got talking for the other fellows to hear, razzing me about my dad being a banker and not having any money,

and a lot of stuff like that. Making believe he was joking, but mad just the same. Well, I called him down finally and he came where I was sitting and put his hand against my chin and knocked my head back against a rack. Pretending he was just in fun, you know. It hurt quite a bit and I jumped up and hit him pretty hard. He went back against the table and I went after him. He was scared then and started to back around the other end, and I told him to keep his mouth shut and went back to sit down again. And just then some one yelled 'Look out, kid!' and I turned my head and got his cue right here. It didn't hit me square, you see; sort of glanced off; but it put me out for the count, I guess. When I came around I was down there where you found me and some one was sopping water all over me."

"What became of Devore?" asked Bert.

"I don't know. I suppose he beat it. I'm going to find him to-morrow, though," added Chick grimly.

"Not to-morrow," said Bert. "You won't be feeling very scrappy in the morning, Charles. Just you leave— Oh! He-hello, Mr. Cade!"

"I thought that was you, Hollins. And Burton, too, eh?"

"Good evening, sir," muttered Chick.

They had reached the corner of State and Academy streets. Neither of them had given thought

"Who did it? How did it happen?"

to the fact that the coach had his quarters in the old white house there, although if they had they would not have seriously considered the possibility of such an adventure. Mr. Cade was leaning over the gate, a pipe in his mouth, and since the nearest street light was well distant they hadn't seen him until he had spoken. Now Chick tugged at Bert's arm, but the coach spoke again.

"Been to the movies, Hollins?" He asked conversationally.

"No, sir, just—just down town. It—it's a nice night, sir, isn't it?"

"Splendid!" Mr. Cade sounded quite enthusiastic. "Remarkable weather for the time of year. A trifle too warm for football, of course, but then every one doesn't play football, eh?" Chick was conscious that the coach was looking intently at him in the half darkness, and again he tugged imperatively at his companion's arm.

"Yes, sir," responded Bert vaguely, "it surely is. Well, we'll be getting—"

But just then there was a scratching sound and a match flared. Mr. Cade held the flame to his pipe, as he did so leveling his gaze across it in the direction of Chick. Then the light went out and a puff of smoke floated over the gate.

"What happened to your head, Burton?" asked the coach quietly.

There was a moment of silence. Then Chick

answered confusedly: "Nothing much, sir. I—well, I was in Mooney's and there was a fellow in there got to swinging his cue around and—"

"And you got in the way of it, eh? Hard luck. Better come inside and let me look at it, I think."

"Oh, thanks, sir, but it's quite all right! I'm going to put some arnica on it when I get to the room. It—it isn't anything, really!"

"Probably not, but it seems to be still bleeding, and if I were you I wouldn't go up to the hall that way." The gate swung inward, Mr. Cade stood aside, and, after a moment of hesitation, Chick entered, followed by Bert. The coach occupied two big rooms on the lower floor of the old house. There was a living-room with a comfortably faded carpet on the floor and furniture of the black walnut age. On a big, round table, littered with magazines and books and a dozen other objects, was a wide-shaded electric lamp in whose radius of mellow light stood a huge arm-chair, not of the walnut period. Beyond was a sleeping room, furnished with Spartan simplicity, while nearby, across a narrow rear hall, was a bathroom. To the latter Mr. Cade led the way.

"Now let's have a look at it," he said. Chick seated himself on a white stool under the beams of the light and the coach unwrapped the bandage. "Hm, you did get a nasty swat, didn't you? That chap swung a mean cue! If it wasn't so late I'd

advise you to get Jake in to dress that and put a couple of stitches in it, but he's probably fast asleep. What time is it, Hollins?"

"Twelve minutes past, sir," replied Bert uneasily.

"Past—"

"Ten."

"Later than I thought. Well, I guess I can strap that down with some plaster, Burton. I'll give it a good washing first." He swung open the door of a cabinet, selected a bottle from a shelf, ran some water in the bowl and went to work with absorbent cotton. "This may hurt a bit at first," he warned.

"All right," said Chick stoically. "It's been hurting right along, sir."

"There'll be some swelling here in the morning, and some one may be curious. Possibly you had better say that you were calling on me this evening. No need to go into details, you know."

"Folks might think you gave it to him, sir," observed Bert in a weak attempt at humor.

"I guess not. I've felt rather murderous toward this chap at times this fall, Hollins, but until to-night I've managed to keep my hands off him." The coach smiled as he spoke, but neither boy missed his meaning. "There you are, Burton. I'm not going to put a bandage on it. It may start to bleed again, but I don't think it will. If

it does, just sop it off with some cotton and try not to disturb the dressing."

"Thank you, sir." Chick arose and looked at himself in the glass. "Gee, I'm a sight! Look like a pirate or something, don't I?"

"Well, you look as if you'd come off second-best," chuckled the coach. He led the way back to the living room. "How does it feel now?" he asked.

"Better, sir, thank you."

"Head ache?"

"Like the dickens."

"Better sit down awhile then before you go up."

"I guess we'd ought to beat it," said Bert. "It's long after ten, and we're supposed to be inside at ten, sir."

"After ten when you got here, wasn't it?"

"Yes, sir, a little."

"I thought so. Well, you can say now that I kept you. Take this chair, Burton, and put your head back. Bring that chair over there up, Hollins. Now I'm going to talk a little to this chap. He's feeling pretty rotten, and that's an advantage to me."

Chick grinned, but looked uneasily across at Bert. Mr. Cade busied himself with refilling and lighting his briar pipe as he went on. "You know, Burton, you haven't been giving me a square deal

this fall. I was looking to you to do big things. I thought you'd be a much better end than last year, but you've let me down badly. I haven't complained, partly because I've been expecting you'd come around, partly because I didn't want to start any unpleasantness. I saw quite early in the season that you were carrying a chip on your shoulder; why I don't know; but I was careful not to disturb it. It wouldn't have done any good to get you sore, old chap. Anyway, the way I doped it, you'd play the game when you got ready and not before. Of course I couldn't wait for you after mid-season. You wouldn't expect me to. And, as it has turned out, I was wise not to, for you haven't come back yet. And now, of course, you're not going to."

The coach paused and the silence was deep. Bert waited for Chick to defend himself, to offer an excuse, an explanation, but Chick made no answer and the coach went on. He had spoken easily, without a suggestion of rancor, and he continued in such manner.

"You're going up to college next fall and, unless you've changed your mind, to my college, Burton. And I guess you mean to play football. That's right, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir," answered Chick in a low voice.

"Well, don't you think you're counting a whole lot on my—my forbearance? Do you realize that,

if I wanted to be nasty—no, not even that; but if I wanted to take my revenge—I could very easily make it impossible for you to ever make a team there? Ever think of that, Burton?"

"No, sir."

"Well, never mind. It's a fact, though. But I haven't any desire to get back at you like that. After all, while you've made things a bit more difficult for me and have delayed the progress of the team, you've been harder on yourself than any one else, I guess. This is your last year here and you're not showing pretty. It's a poor piece of business for a First Team player to do so badly in his last season that he has to sit on the bench during the big game. And, frankly, Burton, as things stand now, that's what you'll be doing Saturday."

"That's for you to say, of course," said Chick with some spirit, "but I don't think I deserve that, sir. I—I may have been pretty poor sometimes, but I can still play better than Shelfer."

"Can you? Perhaps you can. Yes, I'm sure you can. But the point is, Burton, that you don't! And I'm bound to judge you by performance, my boy. Perhaps you think it's a low-down trick to corner you when you're feeling punk and say this sort of thing, but it's just because you are feeling punk that I'm doing it." Mr. Cade smiled. "You know, Burton, if you hadn't had a crack on the

head you'd never have let me say this; you'd have flung off in a temper long ago; and I've had it on my mind for some weeks and I consider that I've got it coming to me to get rid of it. Now, if it isn't unreasonable to ask, Burton, what's the answer to the whole business? Have you lost your interest in football, in the Team? Are you disgruntled because you didn't make the captaincy? I certainly expected you to, and I'll say frankly that I was disappointed that you didn't. Or have you taken a personal dislike to me as a coach? There's some explanation, and I'm curious to know what it is."

After a moment Chick answered dispiritedly: "I don't know, sir. I—maybe if my head didn't ache— Anyway, it's nothing to do with you, Mr. Cade. I suppose I did get grouchy about not getting the captaincy, but I don't believe—" Chick's voice trailed off tiredly.

"I think I can answer that better, sir," said Bert. "He was peeved about the captaincy first, and then he got hold of something that interested him more than football, and, one way and another, he just sort of lost his—his hold. I'm sure he meant to carry on, Mr. Cade, but he let this other thing take up his time and his thought. That's true, isn't it, Chick?"

"I suppose so. Hang it, I didn't really mean to mess things up so, Mr. Cade. Somehow I got

started wrong this season. I—I'm might sorry. I didn't meant to let you down, sir. Or make things harder for you. I—it's like Bert says; I got interested in something else."

"Well, I'm glad to know you didn't mean it, Burton. I'm glad that this other interest explains it. Personally, I couldn't find pool of more interest than football, but we're not all alike."

Perhaps he saw Chick's look of surprise, for he went on in explanation. "You see, I've got a friend in town who works on the Alton paper. Perhaps you know him; Joe Manter. Joe drops in here quite frequently and he brings me the news. About a month or so ago he asked about you. He had been seeing you in Mooney's billiard place pretty frequently, and sometimes quite late. Joe thought I ought to know that you weren't keeping hours. I told him I already knew it, as I did; or, at least, as I suspected. You'll remember that we met one evening on the street about the time you should have been in bed."

"Yes, sir," said Chick. "I've been playing pool a good deal at Mooney's and I've been getting back to school pretty late; sometimes nearly eleven. I might as well tell the truth, sir."

"Eleven!" gasped Bert. "How the dickens did you ever get by Peg?"

"I don't know. Usually he was half asleep when I passed his door."

"Well, of course, that sort of thing didn't help you much to make a showing on the field," commented the coach. "I considered getting after you once or twice, Burton, but I decided each time to keep my hands off. Now, one more thing. Joe Manter was in to see me this forenoon and he told me that an acquaintance of yours, a fellow named Devore, is getting some of his friends around town to put money up to bet on the game next week. Have you heard anything about that?"

"No, sir. That is, he did say something to me a week or more ago about betting on the game. Advised me to get hold of some money and bet it on Kenly. He said Kenly was certain to win this year and that he could get me odds when the time came. But that was all that was said. He hasn't mentioned it to me lately."

"Did you give him any money to bet?"

"No, sir. I didn't have any. I guess I wouldn't have bet it that way, anyhow!"

"Ever talk football with Devore?"

"Why, yes, sir, quite often."

"Well, what was said? Was he interested in football?"

"Yes, I'd say he was. He talked about it a good deal when we were playing pool together."

"Did he seem interested in our plays or our signals?"

"No, sir. I don't remember that he ever showed

much interest in things like plays and signals. We just talked about the game in general, and about last year's game and all that."

"I see. You're certain you didn't explain anything about this year's plans or the plays we were using or our signal code?"

"No, sir, I don't think— Well, maybe I did tell him something about some of the plays. He'd get to boosting Kenly and knocking our team, sir, and saying that we didn't have any plays that would score. Maybe I did talk a bit too much. Did I do any harm, sir?"

"That's what I don't know, Burton. This Devore chap has a bad name, Joe tells me. He got fired from a job in the freight office about a year ago when he was suspected of stealing a small amount of money. Since then he's been depending on his pool playing and on betting for a living. Joe thinks that Devore has got hold of something regarding our team, plays, signals, something or other, that he can hand on to Kenly. He's trying to get hold of enough money to bet against Alton to make a killing, it seems. That's Joe's notion. But I don't believe that Kenly would profit in any such way. I know the coach over there, and he's a square chap. It may be that Devore has wormed something out of you, Burton, or thinks he has, and means to let us know next week, Saturday perhaps, that he has it and try to make us believe that he's

spilled it to Kenly. He probably figures that we'd have to change our plans at the last moment and that if we did we'd lose the game. Joe says he hears from Lakeville that several bets have already been laid over there on Kenly, which makes it look as if Devore was working with some one there. Of course it would help us considerably if you could recall just what you told Devore, Burton; what plays were discussed, for instance."

"I wish I could," said Chick hopelessly. "Honestly, though, I don't see how he could make anything out of what I said, Mr. Cade. We never talked signals, and, anyway, it was before we'd changed to the new ones. Maybe I did explain two or three plays to him, but I don't believe he understood them or could remember them, sir."

Mr. Cade shook his head. "He could if he set out to, I'm afraid. Look here, it's nearly eleven, and you chaps will have to hustle. When you get a good chance, Burton, I want you to sit down and go over your talks with Devore and try to recall about what was said by you regarding the team. It may be that Devore hasn't a thing in the world and that the whole business is poppycock, but I'd like to be certain one way or another. Will you do that?"

"Yes, sir," replied Chick despondently. "Gosh, I seem to have made a complete mess of everything! I wish some one had hit me on the head a

couple of months ago, and hit a lot harder! I—I'm beastly ashamed of myself, Mr. Cade, and it's certainly mighty white of you to—to take it so decently!"

"That's all right. Don't trouble about it too much. Get to bed now, have a good sleep and see me to-morrow."

CHAPTER XIX

TOMMY ISSUES AN ULTIMATUM

Very little was said on the way back to Upton, partly because there was little time remaining before eleven o'clock and it was necessary to hurry, and partly because both boys were busy with their thoughts. Once Bert said in puzzled tones: "Funny Devore wrote to you in a railroad envelope if he got fired a year ago, Chick."

"Probably took a supply of them home," answered Chick. "Just about what he would do, swipe the office stationery. He must have run out of letter-heads, though, because he wrote on a sheet of plain paper. Did you hear what Johnny said? That Devore made his living shooting pool? Gosh, he played me for an easy mark, all right! I'm going to find that guy and push his face in if it's the last thing I do."

Nearing the dormitory Bert spoke again. "I didn't mention it to Johnny, Chick, but the day Devore came up to the room after his money, you know, he tried to pump me. I didn't think anything about it at the time, but I guess he was after some dope on our plays."

"And you didn't tell him a blamed thing, I'll

bet," replied Chick bitterly. "It took me to spill the beans. You wait till I see that rat!"

There was an explanation to be made to Mr. Peghorn before they could climb the stairs to Number 21. "Peg" didn't seem to consider the excuse sufficient, in view of Chick's disreputable appearance, and promised suspiciously to take the matter up with Mr. Cade, but he released them presently and they were in the room when eleven struck. Bert went to sleep soon after his head touched the pillow, but in the opposite bed Chick lay and stared into the dark until long after midnight.

Bert went off to church the next morning without his room-mate, for Chick's head was badly swollen and he had no difficulty in getting excused. After dinner the latter disappeared and Bert surmised that he had gone over to see Mr. Cade. He returned about four, looking more cheerful than Bert had seen him look for many days. Bert brushed the Sunday paper away and sat up on the window-seat.

"Did you see him?" he asked.

Chick nodded, shied his cap to the bed and sat down. "Yes," he said. He stared thoughtfully at his shoes a minute and then raised his gaze to Bert and announced earnestly: "He's a mighty good chap, Bert." He waited, as though expecting contradiction, and when Bert only nodded, he went

on. "Say, he's going to be married. He told me all about it and showed me the girl's picture. She's a corker, Bert. He's got it bad, but I don't blame him."

"When's it going to happen?"

"December, if it does happen."

"Well, I thought you just said—"

"It's like this. We had a long talk and he told me all about it. He says it all depends on whether we beat Kenly, Bert. If we do he's going to quit here and give all his time to his business. He's got a sort of a law practice at home, it seems. Then he will get married around Christmas time. But he says he won't quit if we're licked. Not unless faculty asks him to, and I guess that isn't likely after what he's done other years, eh? He says if this season turns out to be a failure he will hang on until he comes through right. Wants to retire as a success and not a failure. Something like that."

"Still," objected Bert, "I don't see why he can't get married just the same. I fancy the girl isn't going to mind if Kenly licks us!"

"No, but it's something about money. As I understood it he doesn't want to marry until he's settled down in his law practice and can stay at home and attend to things. Anyway, that's the dope. Of course I said I hoped we'd beat Saturday, and—well, what do you suppose he said?"

"Said he hoped so, too, probably."

"He said, 'How hard do you hope it, Burton?' I said that I hoped it a whole lot, or something like that. 'Well, do you hope it hard enough to pitch in and help us?' he asked. I said I sure did. Then—well, he talked a lot. Made me feel sort of small, Bert. You know, when you come right down to it, I've been an awful fizzle this fall!"

"What I want to know is, is he going to let you play?"

"I don't know. I think so. He didn't promise it, though. What he said was that I was to start in to-morrow and forget everything but football and beating Kenly and show what I could do. I guess he doesn't feel like sticking me in ahead of Fitz, and I don't blame him, because, say what you like, Fitz is a mighty good end, Bert."

Bert suppressed a grin. "Then all he agreed to was letting you show what you can do, eh?"

"He didn't agree to anything," responded Chick a trifle warmly. "He made me see what a blamed poor piece of cheese I've been this season and asked me to help him come through with a win. And that on top of all this other business! I'll say that's fair enough, and I'm ready to do everything I can so he can get married like he wants to. Of course I want to beat Kenly, too, but I'm in it now so that girl won't have to wait another year. So he won't, either. What's wrong with that?"

"Not a thing," replied Bert. "Only the girl must be a peach, Chick, to get you all het up like this!"

"She is," replied Chick stoutly. "But I'm not het up, you blamed cynic. I'm just mighty grateful to Johnny for not raising the old Ned about Les Devore. He might have been nasty, for I certainly did a lot of fool talking with my mouth."

"What about that? Could you remember saying anything to Devore that would matter?"

"I said plenty," answered Chick grimly. "I told him about two or three plays; drew them out for him with a piece of billiard chalk on the table one night. I remembered it last night after I got to bed. That Number 14 was one of them. He insisted that we didn't have anything but old stuff and wouldn't let me tell him anything different and I drew the plays out so he could get them. Of course it was a perfectly idiotic thing to do, but I never suspected that he was anything but the dumb-bell he seemed to be."

"Wow!" muttered Bert. "What did Johnny say to that?"

"Well, he took it mighty nice, like I've been trying to tell you. He said he guessed we could get along without Number 14 if we had to, and that a couple of other plays didn't amount to anything anyway. He says he thinks Devore's game is mostly bluff; that Devore will come around about

next Saturday and pretend to be hep to our whole line of offense and show that Number 14 and a couple of other plays to prove it. His idea is that we'll get cold feet and shove a lot of good plays into the discard and get rattled generally. Johnny says Devore couldn't get the Kenly folks to touch his dope with a pair of tongs, and probably doesn't mean to try."

"I can't just see him going to Johnny with that line of talk," mused Bert. "I guess he'd be afraid to."

"No, but he'd write a letter, maybe, or send some one else. Anyhow, Johnny doesn't seem worried much, and that makes me feel a heap better than I did last night. There's one thing, though, that's not so good," he added glumly.

"What's that?"

"He made me promise to keep away from Devore. Anyway, until after the game. And I suppose by that time I'll get over my mad and the little rat never will get what's coming to him!"

"Hard lines," laughed Bert. "Maybe Johnny has something in mind for Devore, though. I wouldn't be surprised, Chick."

Chick brightened. "Say, I never thought of that! I wonder! I hope he has!"

Chick had a lot more to say, much of it repetition of what had gone before, and talked until darkness settled in Number 21. Bert encouraged him, heart-

ily glad that the old enthusiastic Chick had returned. Chick was all for self-sacrifice and service, eager to make amends, filled with a new fervor of loyalty. It might not last, but Bert hoped it would. The loyalty seemed to be more toward Mr. Cade than toward the Team or the School, but that was not important. Results were what counted.

There was a long, rather halting period of practice on Monday, with most of the time given to smoothing out the plays to be used against the ancient enemy. Bert shared the backfield with Ted Ball, Nip Storer and Jim Galvin during the drill and during a large part of the scrimmage with the Second. He discovered that he felt more at home there than before, that he seemed to fit in better. Perhaps he only imagined it, but it did appear as though Nip and he worked together particularly well, and he had a feeling that Nip thought so too. He began to suspect that Ted had known what he was talking about Saturday evening and that it was possible after all that Mr. Cade meant to start him against Kenly.

Chick was a revelation that day, and continued as such right through the week, or at least until the end of practice on Thursday. Thursday saw the last hard work of the season. Chick was like the player who had held down the right end position last fall; into everything hard, fighting every minute, taking knocks and giving them with a

laugh, tackling like a demon and tackling for keeps, pulling down passes even when it seemed they couldn't be reached and comporting himself generally during those four last days like the brilliant player that he really was. Fitz Savell fought him desperately, performing great deeds himself in a despairing effort to hold his place, and the Team and the School talked and marveled and credited a miracle. It was Tommy Parish who advanced the theory, based on the two-inch wound that decorated Chick's forehead, that Chick had had an operation performed on his brain!

Tommy didn't accept Chick's come-back with any enthusiasm. To Tommy the rejuvenation was too good to be true; at least too good to be permanent. He stated to all and sundry that it was merely a flash in the pan, a grand-stand play that wasn't to be taken seriously. He wandered into Number 21 Thursday morning between recitations, when the open door revealed Bert alone over a book, and eased himself against the closed portal and lugubriously munched nuts until the host took cognizance of his presence.

"Get out of here, Tommy, you and your everlasting peanuts," said Bert sternly. "I've got a recitation in fifteen minutes and two more pages of this stuff to go over. Fade away, son!"

"These aren't peanuts," replied Tommy with

funereal gravity, "they're pecans. Have some?"

"No, and you heard what I said."

"Sure." But Tommy didn't move. "Say, tell me this, will you, Bert? Is Chick going to get into that game day after to-morrow? First-off, I mean."

"How the dickens do I know? But why shouldn't he? Hasn't he been playing corking good football lately?"

"Lately? Three or four days, yes. That doesn't mean anything. Put him in against Kenly and he'll play as rotten as ever."

"Oh, forget it, Tommy. And get out of here before I lam you with a book."

"I'm going. Don't be so jumpy. Say, you want to look after your nerves for a couple of days, Bert, or you'll be shot to pieces by Saturday. You ought to take long walks and—"

"I'm going to take a short walk in just about three seconds," answered Bert grimly, "and it's going to end where you're standing, Tommy."

"No, but honest, Bert. Long walks are what you need." Bert pushed back his chair and Tommy moved with a celerity no one would have suspected him capable of. "All right, all right! Keep your dickey on! But, say, let me tell you something, will you?"

"Yes, if you make it mighty short."

"Well, it's this. I don't approve of Johnny starting Chick next Saturday and I'm going to see that he doesn't."

"You are! *You* are! Don't make me laugh, Tommy! How are you going to do it?"

"I know a way. I warned you a week ago that I didn't intend to see the Team beaten, when it doesn't need to be, by playing second-raters. You tell Chick for me that I'm out to get him. I don't want to tell tales, but when it's a duty—"

"Tommy, you're sickening," said Bert. "You've got it in for Chick for no reason at all and you're making an ass of yourself about it. You take my advice and shut up, or—"

"I have not got it in for Chick," declared Tommy emphatically. "Maybe I don't like him much, but that's got nothing to do with this. This is something between me and—and my conscience! I—I've got feelings. Just because I can't play football, or much of anything, fellows think I don't know about such things. I'm just a joke because I'm sort of stumpy and have boils on my neck! Well, I've got more—more patriotism than most of 'em, doggone 'em!" Tommy actually choked and a tear trickled from the corner of one eye. "I'm for the School and the Team, Bert, and I want to see Kenly everlastingly licked. And that's why I say Johnny hasn't any right to take risks by playing Chick Burton or any other fellow

who isn't a topnotcher. If he wants to put Chick in for a little while after the game's cinched, all right. I'm not kicking about that. But Chick's just soldiered all season, and you know it, and Johnny knows it, and what he's been doing the last two or three days can't make up for a whole two months of rotton playing!"

"Well, for Heaven's sake!" gasped Bert.

"Shut up!" said Tommy, blinking hard. "I tell you I've got feelings! And that's why I'm going to tell Johnny what I know about Chick, even if it is low-down. I'm thinking about the Team, I tell you, and Chick and Johnny—and you, too—can go to the dickens!"

"What do you know about Chick?" demanded Bert, not certain whether he wanted to laugh or get mad.

"I know that he hasn't been keeping hours more than a third of the time. You said Mooney was a friend of Chick's in the village. Well, I found out about Mooney's, and I've seen Chick shooting pool there many a night long after ten o'clock. And that's why he's been so rotten all season. One reason, anyway. I've got as much interest in the Football Team as any one else, and I'm not going to see a fellow who won't even keep in training get placed on—"

"Johnny knows all about that, Tommy," interrupted Bert, "and so you can save your breath."

"Yes, he does! That's likely, isn't it?"

"It's true nevertheless. He's known it all the season. Don't go and tell tales when there's nothing to be gained by it, Tommy."

"I don't believe it! He's your chum and you're just trying to save him. But you can't fool me like that, Bert. I've warned you, mind! You tell Chick what I say, because I don't want to do him dirt."

"Sounds like it," laughed Bert. "What do you call it then?"

"I'm working for the Team, I tell you! I'd do the same thing if it was you, or Ted Ball, or Jonas Lowe! Chick's double-crossed Johnny and the rest of us all the fall and he can't pull any grandstand stuff now and get away with it while I've got a tongue. He's cheated, and he's got to take his medicine!"

"Tommy, I tell you that Johnny knows all you're going to tell him. I give you my word. You'll just make yourself look silly if you go to him with—"

"You're lying, Bert." Tommy shook his head gently. "It's all right, though. He's your friend." Tommy's hand wandered toward a pocket mechanically. "I'm sorry I've got to do this." He stuffed a few nut kernels in his mouth and opened the door behind him. "Tell you what I'll do, Bert. I'll give Chick until after dinner to think it over. That's fair. You tell him I say

he's got to keep off the team Saturday. If he agrees to that I'm satisfied. But you let me know, see? If I don't hear from you by half-past one I'm going to Johnny and spill the whole thing."

"Oh, go to the dickens," fumed Bert. "Get out of here, you crazy nut! Beat it!"

"One-thirty," said Tommy hopefully as he disappeared. "You talk to him, Bert. Tell him I say it'll be all right—"

The door slammed shut just before a copy of "Eugénie Grandet" reached it.

CHAPTER XX

THE NIGHT BEFORE

Thursday brought the season's preparations to an end, saw the Second Team disband—with noisy and appropriate ceremonies—and witnessed the appearance of the Football Number of the "Doubleay." The weekly was still brimming with optimism on the subject of the Kenly game, but, like more important publications, it was careful to leave itself an avenue of retreat guarded by "Ifs." Nevertheless the two-page article was encouraging reading to those who wanted Alton Academy to win and who were timorous about expecting her to. Of course there was the usual biographical paragraph regarding each of the players and the absorbing statistics of age, height and weight. And, finally, came "the probable line-up for Saturday's game," as follows:

L.E. Kruger
L.T. Thomas
L.G. Wick or Meecham
C. Patten
R.G. Lowe (Captain)
R.T. Haines

R.E. Savell or Burton
Q.B. Ball
L.H.B. Storer
R.H.B. Ness or Hollins
F.B. Galvin

Bert rather expected Chick to voice objection to being relegated to second place by the "Flubdub," for the impression about the Academy was that he had proved his right to start the game, an impression that Chick doubtless shared. But there wasn't even a murmur from him, and Bert marveled. Bert had his own problem to solve, which was why Ness's name had been set down for the right half-back position. Ness hadn't played at right more than half a dozen times during the fall and surely not since mid-season. He was first substitute for Storer, and as such a very valuable member for the team. In the end, after mentally considering all sorts of backfield combinations that included Tyron and Keys and Walsh and even Parkhurst, Bert concluded that the "Flubdub" had merely made a mistake. The "Flubdub" had been known to!

Commencing Tuesday, there was a cheer meeting every night that week. Mr. Cade had advised the members of the squad to stay away from them, and they did, but that didn't prevent them from hearing a good deal of the enthusiasm, for almost

always the gathering in the auditorium, so soon as the arranged program was concluded, adjourned to the campus and started a fresh and impromptu celebration which usually kept up until a faculty member appeared on the scene. Friday evening the outdoor portion of the event was more than ordinarily prolonged and hectic, the students marching from hall to hall, pausing in front of each for songs or cheers or both, and finally winding up in front of the Principal's residence. In the dormitories, non-participants—squad members almost without exception—leaned from open windows and looked and hearkened with varying emotions. In 21 Upton, Bert and Chick and Dutch Kruger foregathered at the casement and watched the ragged procession moving across the sward from Haylow to the little mansard-roofed house that stood by itself on the south edge of the campus. They were singing "Gray-and-Gold," and heard at that distance it sounded rather impressive, rather stirring.

"Gray-and-Gold! Gray-and-Gold!
Let your colors brave unfold,
Wave away, bring dismay
To the foe we meet to-day.
March along, brave and strong,
Alton comes with cheer and song.
Naught can hold 'gainst courage bold!
Rah! Hurrah! for the Gray-and-Gold!"

The song ended and the cheering began. The dark mass spread fan-shaped in front of the house. A light appeared in the hall. The cheering subsided. "Can you hear him?" whispered Dutch. Chick shook his head. "No. Just a word now and then. Not missing much, though, for Mac says the same thing every year!" "'Self-sacrifice and devotion,'" murmured Bert. "I got that much." The audience broke into a long "A-a-aye!" of applause, was silent again. Chick yawned and drew away from the window. "He's good for another ten minutes, fellows." "Well, I'm not," said Bert. Dutch held up his hand and waved an imaginary megaphone. "Now, fellows!" he cried earnestly, aping a cheer leader. "Three long sneers for Kenly! Every one into it! All together and let's *go!*" The imaginary megaphone was tossed aside, Dutch threw up his arms, bent sideways, twiddled his fingers and swung his hands in an arc as he straightened his body.

"*Sni-i-if! Sni-i-if! Sni-i-if! Ken-le-e-ey!*"

"Rotten!" scolded Dutch, shaking a fist in their faces. "They couldn't hear that across the field! Try it again and make it good, fellows! *Come on!*"

"Can't," laughed Chick. "I've bust my sniffer!"

"Wait till I have a cold, Dutch," said Bert.

"Mac's through. They're cheering again." He went back to the window.

"Doctor McPherson! Doctor McPherson! Doctor McPherson!"

Then Freeman Naughton's voice in the moment of succeeding silence, and another cheer, loud and measured, ending with "Alton! *Alton!* ALTON!" The throng dispersed then, came trailing back over the grass in ones and twos and larger groups, still singing, laughing, joyously noisy. "Sometimes," remarked Dutch, leaning over Bert's shoulder, "it seems to me the guys who get the most fun out of football are the ones who don't play!"

"You said a mouthful," agreed Chick.

There was a final session in the gymnasium Friday evening. Some thirty-five youths sat on the benches in front of the blackboard and three coaches faced them. There was a much graver note apparent to-night, the coaches spoke in lower tones, there was less mild horse-play amongst the fellows. Mr. Cade drew and figured with his chalk and asked questions, and now and then one or two of the players arose and walked or trotted in front of the benches in explanation of a point. There was no more drill, however, and only Mr. Cade made anything approaching a speech, and that didn't bear much resemblance. After he had ended he held up a hand, anticipating Jim Galvin,

who had sprung to his feet. "No cheering, fellows! Leave that for to-morrow. And see that you've something to cheer for! Every one straight to the dormitories now and get to bed before ten o'clock. Squad dismissed!"

But not all the squad, for he detained Ted Ball and Chick and Bert. Mr. Lake and Mr. McFadden remained also, deep in a discussion. Mr. Cade straddled a bench and brought forth a voluminous document from a pocket. "Thought you'd be interested, Burton," he said. "And you, too, Hollins. Ball knows about it." Chick accepted the three sheets of paper, unfolded them and read, with Bert looking over his shoulder.

The letter was addressed to Mr. Cade and ran as follows:

"Some of the fellows on your team have been doing a lot of talking around town lately and giving secrets away right and left. The writer isn't telling any names but if you don't believe it look at the end and see. Some unscrupulous parties have given this information to the Kenly Hall football coaches and you'll be in a mean jam if you use these plays and a lot more against them. They know more than a dozen of our best plays, formations, signals and so forth and I'm telling you this as a sympathizer so you won't get caught napping and try those plays and so forth on Kenly. It's

rotten business, Mr. Cade, and some one ought to be made to suffer, but you know how it is when people get a chance of making a little money. Take the advice of a well-wisher and don't try the plays you were intending to use because you'll get licked hard if you do. Kenly Hall is hep to the whole works and is looking for those plays. I would sign my name only the fellows who are doing this dirty trick would make it hot for me if they knew I had squealed. Yours for Fair Play, and best wishes for success,

"UNKNOWN."

Followed two sheets on which were drawn, rather neatly, three football plays, among them Number 14. There were one or two minor inaccuracies, but any one familiar with such matters could easily have fathomed the diagrams. Chick handed the documents back, looking questioningly at Mr. Cade. "What are you going to do, sir?" he asked anxiously.

"We're going to use the plays; that is, that 14; the others are already discarded, you know. The whole business is a bluff, just as we suspected. You can read that in every line."

"Gee, I hope so!" muttered Chick. "Aren't you going to do anything to Devore, sir?"

"N-no, not exactly." Mr. Cade smiled. "It may comfort you to know, however, that Joe Man-

ter—I mentioned Joe, didn't I?—has covered the money put up by Mr. Devore's—er—syndicate. About two hundred dollars, I believe. Joe got odds of four to five."

"You mean he's bet two hundred dollars that we'll win?" asked Chick incredulously.

The coach nodded. "About a hundred and seventy, I believe. I don't know how much of the two hundred belongs to 'Devore, but if Kenly loses he's bound to be unpopular around town for awhile!"

"A hundred and seventy's a good deal of money for a newspaper reporter to have," observed Bert. Mr. Cade met his gaze and nodded gravely.

"He didn't put it all up himself, Hollins. I understand that three or four others went into it. Personally I don't approve of betting. In the present case, however, as a means of applying punishment where it's richly deserved—well, I find justification for it!"

"But—but, gosh," exclaimed Chick. "If we don't win the game Manter loses his money!"

"Undeniably, Burton," replied the coach cheerfully. "There is generally an element of uncertainty in betting."

"Well, I hope we win," sighed Chick.

"And so do I. If Joe loses his wager—" and Mr. Cade glanced briefly at Bert— "I shall feel, to some extent, as though it were a personal loss!"

He arose in token that the conference was at an end and the three boys said good night. Outside, Ted chuckled.

"Bet I know who the three or four are," he said. "He and McFadden and Lake!"

"Do you suppose so?" asked Bert. "Say, we've got one more reason for winning, Chick; to part Devore from his money!"

"I'd like to part him from his head," growled Chick.

As the chums entered Upton, Bert descried Tommy Parish ascending the stairs. Tommy looked back and accelerated his pace, but in the next corridor he was still in sight as Chick opened the door of Number 21, and as Bert prepared to follow Chick in a loud hiss came from farther down the hall. Tommy was beckoning. Bert obeyed the summons and Tommy came half-way back and spoke in whispers.

"Say, Bert, I thought you'd like to know that I didn't spill that to Johnny. I meant to, but—well, it seemed too rotten mean. Maybe we'll get beaten to-morrow, but—but there are some things a fellow just can't do, eh? Well, so long. *À chaque jour suffit sa peine,* old *fève!*"

Bert felt a bit disappointed in himself that night. Chick was very evidently nervous and wakeful and would have talked on and on long after the light was out, but for the life of him Bert couldn't keep

his eyes open more than twenty minutes after his head was on the pillow! Recalling the confessions of Ted Ball and Lum Patten, he concluded that there was something missing in his make-up. He pictured Ted lying awake with Coles Wistar reading poetry to him through the small hours and felt a trifle sorry for himself. Quite evidently he was missing an excitement, a thrill, that belonged to a normal football player on the eve of a big game. He answered Chick more and more at random, his voice growing sleepier and sleepier, until finally—

He awoke to a gray world. There was mist on the window panes and the steam pipes were clattering loudly. Chick still slumbered, the bedclothes tossed and snarled about him. The clock said six-forty-seven. Bert tried to go back to sleep for the remaining twelve minutes, but he couldn't. If excitement had passed him by last night it was in full possession of him this morning. He swung out of bed, shivering, and looked reprovingly at the misted windows. What a day for the Big Game!

CHAPTER XXI

ALTON CELEBRATES

There was no moisture in the little easterly wind that blew across the field when Alton kicked off to Kenly, but the clouds were heavy and the afternoon was gray and chill. Lack of sunshine, however, had not affected the attendance. The stands were filled, the rows of settees from the gymnasium and chairs from the halls were occupied and the crowd spilled over the ground in large numbers and sat on rugs, newspapers, anything that would serve. Alton was present, Academy and town, and so to a lesser degree was Lakeville. Gray-and-gold banners, arm-bands and megaphones lighted one side of the field, the cherry-and-black of Kenly sprinkled the other. Earnest youths, white-sweatered, bareheaded, gesticulated and cavorted while rival cheers and songs rose to the sullen sky. At two o'clock, having won the toss, Kenly spread her warriors over the north end of the gridiron. Warriors they looked, too, rangy, broad-shouldered youths, red-sleeved, black-helmeted. Captain Jonas swung a sturdy leg and the ball rose in the air. But there were no tees that year and the pigskin's flight was short and low. Alton's backs

were far from the catcher and Kenly lined up on her thirty-four.

Two plunges, with a tackle carrying, ripped the Alton line wide and made it first down almost in the middle of the field. But a third attempt was stopped short and a full-back smash on Wick yielded but two yards. Kenly shifted to the left and sent her quarter through Lowe for four more. Then, however, with four to go, Kenly had to punt. The effort, aided slightly by a gust of wind, was good for forty yards and dropped close to the sideline and into Storer's arms. Nip made six before he was nailed by a Kenly end and the ball lay on the Alton twenty-one. Galvin tried the left wing from punting position but was unable to gain, and on the second down Storer kicked to the enemy's forty-six where Dutch Kruger slammed the catcher to the earth. Time was taken out for Kenly while her quarter-back was ministered to.

The Cherry-and-Black showed her system then. Using a shift she divided the attack and alternated the ball between the short and long side of the line, gaining first down on three plunges and again on four. Alton was puzzled by the method and had difficulty in finding the runner. The Kenly backs were heavy and, although they started slow and failed to get under full steam by the time they reached the line, they gained consistently. Gus Thomas was hurt and Dozier took his place at left

tackle. Alton tightened up on her thirty-three yards and Kenly used two downs to make four yards through the line. A short pass over the center was knocked down by Storer. The enemy right guard was pulled out of the line and sent back to near the forty-yard line. That Kenly meant to try a field-goal from there seemed improbable. The ball went to the kicker, however, and he swung his leg before he sprang off to the right. Dozier attempted a tackle and was brushed aside and the runner, swinging wide, eluded Storer and kept on until he was run out on the fourteen.

That Alton was due to be scored on was fairly certain, and cherry-and-black banners waved wildly. One smash at the center of the defending team put Kenly on the twelve. Then, using the puzzling shift and split attack, the enemy right half charged past Haines and went to the three yards with Bert attached to his waist. It was Galvin who brought him down. It took two attempts to get the Kenly full-back across the goal line, but get there he did, choosing Captain Jonas as a final victim.

Bert lined up under his goal post fuming at himself for not making a better tackle. If he had got lower that runner would never have reeled off nine yards. He should have stopped him well short of the five. Regrets, however, were vain, for there

was the ball sailing over the cross-bar and Kenly had a nice seven-point lead!

Again Captain Lowe booted the ball from mid-field, and this time it sailed high and far and Savell and Haines were both ready for the catcher on his twelve yards and no amount of squirming could get him free. The whistle blew for the period then.

Alton retreated slowly to the enemy's twenty-six, and there Kenly punted. The kick went for only twenty-four yards and it was Storer who pulled it down and, with Ted Ball speeding ahead, eluded two of the enemy and carried back to Kenly's thirty-six before he was smothered. On the first play Bert took the ball and tried a straight plunge past tackle, making a scant two. Galvin smashed into the left of the line for two more. Galvin then threw a forward-pass to the left and Storer missed it by inches. Storer went back to the forty-yard line and punted to the seven. Kenly let the ball roll over and lined up on her twenty. On the first play she was caught off-side and was set back. A fake kick with the punter sliding off Haines got four yards and then Kenly punted to Alton's forty-three, Ball catching and coming back six.

A sweep to the left, with Galvin carrying, netted seven, and the same play with Bert in possession added four more. Storer smashed out two through

the opposing right guard and then threw straight over center to Bert, who, although fairly carried back by the secondary defense, netted six more. With two yards to go on third down Bert shot off around the left behind a wall of interference, cut in sharply and eluded four tacklers before he was hurled to earth on the Kenly eighteen. That tackle left Bert flat and time was called. When he was on his feet again there was Larry Walsh reporting and Bert trailed sadly off, sadly and sorely too, for the termination of that eleven-yard dash had been a thing of bursting stars and whirling moons!

It was Walsh who ate his way by short, irresistible attacks on the enemy line from the eighteen yards to the seven, Walsh only once relieved by Galvin. The chain had to be dragged in to decide matters after the eighth down, but Alton was safe by a few inches. Storer went wide for a scant yard and left the ball nearly in front of the posts, with less than forty seconds of playing time left. Galvin retired to the fifteen-yard line, took the pass from Patten, faked a drop-kick and hurled straight past the right-hand goal post to Savell. Fitz, although apparently hopelessly surrounded by foes, pulled the pigskin down and went to earth four yards behind the line!

Storer added a point from the try and Alton shouted frantically and loudly. Coach Cade

rushed Cahill, Howard and Lovell in and Patten, Haines and Ball retired. Kenly kicked off to Bus Lovell on the latter's seven yards, Bus ran nearly across the field in an effort to find a hole in the charging line of enemy players and finally was thrown for a yard loss. And then an asthmatic horn ended the half.

For fifteen minutes the rival cheering sections entertained with song while anxious enthusiasts discussed past and future. So far neither team had shown an attack quite good enough to warrant implicit faith on the part of its friends. Kenly had actually gained more ground by rushing and had proved herself somewhat more irresistible than Alton, but no great advantage had been exhibited by either contender. So far as the final outcome was concerned, that first half might as well not have been played.

Alton took the field again about as she had ended the second period, the only difference in her lineup being at right end where Chick had succeeded Savell. Kenly kicked off and Alton caught on her twelve yards and went to the sixteen before she was stopped. On three sweep plays Galvin and Storer made it first down on the twenty-eight. Galvin tried a long pass down the field, but Storer failed to get near it and the ball grounded. Walsh poked his way through the right for three yards and then was stopped behind his line for a loss of

two. Storer punted to Kenly's thirty where a back fumbled and finally, closely pursued by Chick, fell on the ball near his twenty. Alton was caught holding in the line and Kenly went to the twenty-six and started on a march that brought her finally to the enemy forty-two. There Alton called on the services of Hop Meecham and Lum Patten and stopped the invasion. Kenly tried a forward-pass, which failed, and then punted.

Lovell was thrown hard on his five-yard line and gave way to Ted Ball. Storer got free around left end and reeled off eight yards before he was thrown out of bounds. Walsh failed to gain in the line and Storer punted to Kenly's forty where Chick nailed the catcher. On the first play Kenly fumbled and recovered for a seven-yard loss. An off-side penalty set her farther back and, after a sweep that was good for two yards, she punted to Storer on Alton's forty-four. Galvin made three and then four more. Walsh was stopped for no gain, and with three to go on fourth down, Ball used a double-pass and sent Storer around left end for five. The third period ended.

Bert went in and Walsh retired. On the first play from the Kenly twenty-seven Bert took the ball from Patten and shot around left end behind strong interference. Past the line, he was hit by a tackler and went down. But he rolled over, found his feet and went on again to the fifteen. There

a second enemy launched himself at the runner, missed and sent Bert once more to earth. Rolling, Bert went nearly to the five-yard line. There he once more recovered himself and, dodging a third tackler, went over!

Ted Ball tried to kick the goal but sent the pigskin into the line instead, and Alton had to be satisfied with the six points. It sounded as though she was!

Kenly kicked off to Howard who caught on the sixteen and plowed through a small army of opposing players to his twenty-two. Ted tried Number 14 for the second time and Galvin ripped through between guard and center on the left for twelve yards. Galvin got four more on the other side but was hurt and gave way to Couch. Dozier came around and slid off tackle for three and Kruger made the same trip for three more and first down on the Alton forty-five. Kenly broke through and stopped Storer for a loss. Ball scampered around the right for three and Bert added two off tackle on the other side of the line. Storer went back to the forty-two yards and faked a punt, throwing the pigskin far and to the right. Chick found no one to dispute his right to the ball, made a clean catch of it and went on along the side-line from the fifty to the twenty-six, where he was forced out.

Kenly tried desperately to turn back the in-

vasion and twice stopped plays at tackle. On third down, however, Storer threw a short pass to Bert and once more Bert gave an imitation of a corkscrew. He caught on the sixteen, slipped out of a tackler's arms, zigzagged to the ten-yard line, was almost stopped there but got free again and was finally brought down on the four, just short of his goal. Storer tried the left for no gain and, with Number 14, Couch got two of the remaining four yards. Storer went back as if to drop-kick and Patten shot the ball to Bert who took it on the run and swung wide around the Kenly right wing and went over almost without opposition close to the corner.

This time Storer made the try and sent the pigskin neatly across, and the score-board proclaimed Kenly 7, Visitor 20, and Tommy Parish swallowed a peanut shell and almost choked!

With less than three minutes left, Kenly substituted generously and Coach Cade made a few changes; Tate for Kruger—Dutch was about played out—, Tifton for Captain Lowe and Ness for Storer. Ness took the kick-off, was toppled where he caught and then ripped off eight yards past the Kenly left tackle. Kenly, although dismayed, fought desperately and two downs left the ball a half-foot short of the distance. Ted Ball sent the backs around the right and snaked a hidden ball over for the needed distance. Sub-

stitutes began to appear after every play, and presently Bert, happy but protesting, gave way to Keys. There wasn't much left of the first-string line-up during the last minute or so. Kenly, too, was presenting a practically fresh team. Alton made her way to her forty-two yards on two dashes by Ness, and there, with the last minute ticking itself off, Riding, just from the side-line, dropped back, took the ball from center and threw it across the field to Keys and Keys threw far down into the gray dimness to where Chick, hand upraised, was circling in toward the center of the field.

The Kenly safety man was almost on him when Chick got his fingers on the ball, but Chick was not to be stopped. Somehow he twisted himself aside, felt the tackler's frantic hands slip away, staggered back and saw a clear field ahead. But pursuit was close behind him as he started away, pursuit composed of friend and foe jumbled confusedly. Perhaps Chick was thinking of the countenance framed on Johnny Cade's mantel, perhaps he was remembering that here and now were his last moments of preparatory school football, perhaps he wasn't thinking a thing but that thirty yards between him and the goal. That as may have been, he ran faster than he had ever run in his life in a football game. Behind him interference and attack met and dropped from the chase, but right to the last white line a red-and-black-

legged enemy kept on his heels, arms outstretched for the tackle that was never made until too late. Chick was run out when he reached the goal-line, and he crumpled up a yard beyond it, the ball under him and the equally exhausted pursuer flung across his legs.

No one cared a mite that Pete Ness fumbled the pass and so never had a chance to add a goal to that touchdown. Twenty-six points were enough! Not for years had Alton triumphed so signally over the ancient rival, and Alton made much of the victory. Over the field she marched, cheering, singing, throwing caps and megaphones aloft, while twilight gathered fast and the Kenly horde, standing with bared heads, sung the school song. The Alton players, heroes all, bobbed about on the shoulders of maniacal youths, Lum Patten with the scarred football clasped in triumph under one tattered gray sleeve.

"I guess he's got it by now," mused Tommy Parish. "Some present, if you *demander moi.*"

"No one has any idea of asking you, Tommy," replied Bert. "As a matter of plain and unvarnished fact, it wasn't so blame much of a present after all."

"What? Why wasn't it?" exclaimed Tommy, outraged.

"Well, was it? There are more than four hun-

dred fellows here and we managed to get an eighty-dollar chest of near-silver!"

"Well, a lot of tightwads didn't subscribe!" Tommy protested.

"I know. That's the answer."

"Shut up, you two," grumbled Chick. "For Pete's sake, Tommy, don't you ever do any studying?"

Tommy nodded and dropped a hand into a pocket. The nod wasn't an emphatic nod, for he was undergoing an attack of boils just now, but its meaning was plain. "Sure, I have to study," he replied untroubledly, "but I don't believe in overdoing it. Say, Chick, don't you think the wedding present we sent Johnny was all right?"

"Of course it was. He's got enough plated silver to last him a lifetime. Say, by the way, the wedding's to-morrow, isn't it?" Chick leaned back from the table and looked thoughtful. "Well, I hope he will be happy. That's sure a nice girl he's marrying!"

Bert chuckled. "I believe you're sweet on her yourself, Chick."

Chick grinned but made no denial. Tommy said: "Wish he'd change his mind and come back next year, though."

"He won't," said Chick positively. "You fellows will have some one else to boss you next fall."

"He won't boss me," said Tommy comfortably. "Say, Chick, what train you going on Wednesday?"

"First one I can get. Why?"

"Mind if I come along? I'm only taking a small bag home, so maybe I can help you with your stuff."

Chick shot an appealing look at Bert, but the latter only grinned and said: "Good scheme, Tommy. You New Yorkers must hang together. Maybe you can get Chick to play with you a bit during vacation!"

Chick uttered a howl of rage. "Shut up, you dumb-bell! Tommy, for the love of lemons, beat it and let me study, won't you?"

"Sure!" Tommy bestowed a last lingering look of affection on Chick and ambled to the door. There, "Well, see you to-morrow!" he added cheerfully.

"Heaven forbid!" moaned Chick devoutly under his breath.

"Night, Bert." Tommy almost vanished. Then, however, his round countenance came into view again. "Say, I almost forgot, fellows! Have some peanuts?"

THE END

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TOM SLADE WITH THE FLYING CORPS
TOM SLADE AT BLACK LAKE
TOM SLADE ON MYSTERY TRAIL
TOM SLADE'S DOUBLE DARE
TOM SLADE ON OVERLOOK MOUNTAIN
TOM SLADE PICKS A WINNER
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ROY BLAKELEY'S MOTOR CARAVAN
ROY BLAKELEY, LOST, STRAYED OR STOLEN
ROY BLAKELEY'S BEE-LINE HIKE
ROY BLAKELEY AT THE HAUNTED CAMP
ROY BLAKELEY'S FUNNY BONE HIKE
ROY BLAKELEY'S TANGLED TRAIL
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The Davis children visit the Parke home and join zealously in the games of playing General Washington. So zealously, in fact, that little Jim almost loses his scalp.

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The children wage a fierce battle upon the roof of a hotel in New York City. Then, visiting the Davis home in Philadelphia, the patriotic Washingtons vanquish the Hessians on a battle-field in the empty lot back of the Davis property.

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TOM SWIFT AND HIS WIRELESS MESSAGE
TOM SWIFT AMONG THE DIAMOND MAKERS
TOM SWIFT IN THE CAVES OF ICE
TOM SWIFT AND HIS SKY RACER
TOM SWIFT AND HIS ELECTRIC RIFLE
TOM SWIFT IN THE CITY OF GOLD
TOM SWIFT AND HIS AIR GLIDER
TOM SWIFT IN CAPTIVITY
TOM SWIFT AND HIS WIZARD CAMERA
TOM SWIFT AND HIS GREAT SEARCHLIGHT
TOM SWIFT AND HIS GIANT CANNON
TOM SWIFT AND HIS PHOTO TELEPHONE
TOM SWIFT AND HIS AERIAL WARSHIP
TOM SWIFT AND HIS BIG TUNNEL
TOM SWIFT IN THE LAND OF WONDERS
TOM SWIFT AND HIS WAR TANK
TOM SWIFT AND HIS AIR SCOUT
TOM SWIFT AND HIS UNDERSEA SEARCH
TOM SWIFT AMONG THE FIRE FIGHTERS
TOM SWIFT AND HIS ELECTRIC LOCOMOTIVE
TOM SWIFT AND HIS FLYING BOAT
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THE RADIO BOYS WITH THE ICEBERG PATROL
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THE RADIO BOYS ON SIGNAL ISLAND
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